

Waiting on the Lord

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[0 : 00] Well, evening, folks. Question, how are you? Seriously, though, how are you?

I was thinking on the way, in the car on the way up. Friends, how are we doing? Honestly, are we, some of us here tonight, and we're tired? Physically tired?

Maybe spiritually struggling? Maybe we are doubting? Maybe we're hurting?

Maybe each day feels like repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. Friends, what is it that's going to keep us going? What's going to get us out of bed in the morning? What is going to keep us going when life feels like it is the same every day, every day, every day, every day?

The place that the Bible tells us to look is to look and throw ourselves upon the grace that's found in Jesus Christ alone.

[1 : 01] It's what we need tonight. We need a big, breathtaking picture of who he is and what he's done for us and what he's doing now.

And so, friends, as we come to Isaiah tonight, I guess we've read two chapters there. We're going to try and take in four. But that's what we're going to see tonight, I hope.

Who our Savior is, be strengthened in him. And a glorious, yet terrifying, vision of the future. And let this encourage your souls tonight.

So let's just be real as we begin. Let's just come to our great God. Remember, who knows our situations, who knows our hearts, who knows our struggles, who knows our needs. Let's come to him tonight and let's just throw ourselves upon him in prayer as we begin.

Psalm 119.

[2 : 17] Great love for us, Lord, tonight. And Father, it's our prayer as we come to your word. The promise that as it goes forth, that it will not return to you void.

And Lord, we pray that that would be our experience tonight. That we would be strengthened by a glorious picture of Jesus Christ. Father, thank you that you hear us. We're not praying and it's hitting the roof.

Thank you that you hear us because we pray in our Savior's name. Amen. Amen. Folks, Isaiah 24. Here's what I can safely say now that our teams have gone out.

Apparently, according to recent surveys, Generation Z are the most impatient generation to have ever existed. We can say that, I guess, it's not all their fault.

It is our fault, I guess. There it goes. It's not all their fault. It's our fault, right? This is the world that we've created, I guess.

[3 : 17] Generation Z, right? Imagine it's largely to do with the area and the era in which we live, right? Amazon Prime, Deliveroo, Netflix. When I was growing up, you went to Pizza Hut.

If it didn't come within 25 minutes, you could get it for free and you started the timer the minute the person had left. But here's the thing. See, if you had to do a graph and you imagine the x-axis was the progression of years and the y-axis was levels of impatience.

What direction do you reckon that line, that graph would go in? Up, as the years progressed, right? Up. Meaning that we, as a generation, are getting increasingly impatient.

Now, maybe some of you grew up in the 80s. I don't know the anthem of the 80s. I think it was released in 1989. Those contemplative and rich words are meant to, I guess, you think about the deeper meaning of life.

I want it all. I want it all. I want it all. And I want it now. Right? Words penned by 40-year-old men in their prime by queen could have easily been penned by a ranting two-year-old, couldn't they?

[4 : 21] I want it all. I want it all. I want it all. And I want it now. We are living in a world that is becoming increasingly impatient. And you and I are swimming in that tide every day.

We want things now. We want it done now. Why is it not done now? And I think that's why this passage goes greatly against the cultural air which you and I breathe day in, day out. Because it's a passage that calls God's people, this generation, and I take it our generation. It calls us to wait.

And the thing is, as I've spent time in this passage this week, I've realized one thing that I'm not good at. Right? And I imagine you're not good at it either. It doesn't come naturally for us to wait. And yet Isaiah's aim is to build the faith of God's people in this generation. Build their faith in the certainty of God's word for the future.

[5 : 19] This is what's going to happen so that they live by faith, trusting him day after day after day after day in the present. Because I imagine this generation, their lives are just like ours in many ways.

Troubles all over the place. Tired. Weary. Doubting. Looking around at the nations, the superpowers round about, thinking, are we going to survive? Surely there's other places that we can put our trust in.

Isaiah, the Lord through Isaiah says, wait on the Lord. Know who he is. And know what he's going to do. Have a look at verse 9 of chapter 25.

I think this is our key verse, this section. As I said, we're trying to take in chapters 24 to 27 tonight. This section of Isaiah that's often called Isaiah's mini apocalypse.

In other words, this is what's going to happen in the end, says God. And that's why the truths that we find here, we need them in our lungs, our spiritual lungs. We need them in our minds.

[6 : 20] We need them in our hearts because we ain't at the end yet. But what we see is that we've even more reason tonight to wait confidently on the Lord. Now, here's the central verse of this section of Isaiah.

Probably slightly better than the ESV, but we'll go with it, right? It will be said on that day. And that's the phrase that comes up again and again and again. It's the end of history. This is the song that God's people are going to confidently and victoriously sing.

Do you hear this? Here it is, the central verse. Behold, means look, take him in. See it. This is our God. And we have waited for him that he might save us.

This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. And it's the theme that comes up again, verse 8 of chapter 26.

If you've got it there, in the path of your judgments, O Lord, we what? We wait for you. Your name and remembrance are the desire of the soul.

[7 : 25] We'll come back to that later on. Wonderful truths. Incredible truths contained in these verses. We wait. It's what Isaiah's longing that this generation would do.

Wait on the Lord. What does it mean to wait? What are we waiting on? Two things, I think, to see. These are two points for tonight, if you're not in the taking notes. Two things we see in these verses.

What are we waiting on? Firstly, we're waiting on the Lord to banish the presence of evil. Right? Chapters 25 and 26, as glorious as they are, they only make sense in light of chapter 24.

And chapter 24 presents us with a grim picture of God's judgment. Now, we've spent a few weeks here. Remember, a few weeks ago, we thought about what God had to say to Babylon.

Everything that Babylon as a nation represented. Remember, they said that the storyline of Isaiah could almost be the tale of two cities. The city of God, the city of man. The city of man is Babylon.

[8 : 23] Babylon is everything that this city symbolizes, going against the ways of the Lord.

Remember, God's people in this time are tempted to look to Babylon. And everything that she is and represents is the place where they'll find security and life.

And last week, I guess, along similar lines, we thought about Tyre. And moving, I guess, from the surrounding nations.

Okay, my iPad's died. We're going to go with this. This is all off the cuff and off the head. So, Isaiah's talking about the surrounding nations, round about. What God has to say about them. So, this is the whole world here that's being encompassed in Isaiah 24. So, what is God saying about them? Let me just rattle off some words and see if we can see what God is saying about the final judgment.

Okay? He is saying, firstly, if you look at Isaiah 24, he is saying, firstly, that it's going to be fair. It's going to be fair. So, do you see verse 2?

[9 : 31] There is no favoritism with this God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And it's one of these things, isn't it? We've said it often when we're thinking about life in our world.

We're thinking about what Dominic Cummings. What did people say? It's not fair that people have one rule for one and one rule for another. We've said it when Boris Johnson and his people, they didn't isolate after testing positive for a test.

It's not fair that there's one rule for one and one rule for another. And that is true. And therefore, see what God says.

Verse 2 and 3. And it shall be as with the people, so with the priests. Do you see it? As with the slaves, so with the master. As with the maids, so with her mistress.

As with the buyer, so with the seller. As with the lender, so with the borrower. As with the creditor, so with the debtor. So this is going to be a fair judgment. It's all going to be one rule for one, one rule for another.

[10 : 29] Social standing, and I think religious standing, if you see it here, is going to count for nothing on that day. What will count is how a person has responded to God's King, Jesus. It will be fair.

It will be total. Verse 3. The earth will be utterly empty and utterly plundered, for the Lord has spoken this words. See the twofold repetition of utterly there.

It will be moral. Verse 5. The earth lies defiled under its inhabitants, for they transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant.

So this is a moral judgment that God is bringing on the nations. It will be fatal. Verse 19 and 20. The earth is utterly broken. The earth is split apart. The earth is violently shaken.

The earth staggers like a drunken man. It sways like a hut. Its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls. And it will not rise again. And lastly, it will be final.

[11 : 31] So if you dip your toe into verse 1 of chapter 27, remember that in this day, the sea, I guess, represents evil. And I guess Leviathan here, met him not so long ago in the book of Job.

He's symbolic for the devil. Look what God says will happen on that day. In that day, the Lord, with his hand and great and strong sword, will punish Leviathan, the fleeing serpent.

Leviathan, the twisting serpent. And he will slay the dragon that's in the sea. So this is God's judgment on evil. All those who have rejected trust in the Lord, God brings his righteous judgment on all of the nations, all of the peoples of the world who have ever existed.

Equal, total, moral, fatal, final. And the city that was proud and arrogant is now, verse 10, the city of chaos.

Joy has been sapped out of life. Again, this is symbolic, but it's symbolic truth. As the Lord judges the world, this is grim reading. But I take it that as we feel the seriousness of what God is telling us here, and this is a loving warning, isn't it?

[12 : 46] It's a loving warning about what is going to happen in the end. I take it this is a comforting bit of news for the faithful in Isaiah's day who are hearing this, those who are currently feeling and are about to face the brutality of foreign armies.

Also, those who look around, they look around at the hypocrisy and the rottenness of God's people. I think, what's the point? What is the point? If those who are meant to be our leaders are not doing this, then what is the point?

Blatantly disregarding him. They're carrying their name of the Lord on their lips, but they ain't living it out with their lives. I take it this is comforting news that the Lord sees.

He will not be mocked. The Lord sees, and the Lord will deal with it. Let me just, before we move on, let me just bring out two glimmers of grace in this chapter of judgment.

Two shining diamonds in the pile of coal, right? The first is at verse 6. There will be a few people who will be left. And get this, where will those people, and where will those shouts of victory be heard from?

[14 : 02] Verse 14 onwards of chapter 24. Get this, verse 14. In the east, give glory to God. Do you see that? In the east, in the coastlands of the sea, I take it people from the nations of like Babylon and like Tyre.

People from these places, in the end, are going to sing praise to the Lord. And from the ends of the earth, God will draw people to himself. So there is a remnant here, but they're not just going to come from Israel.

They're going to come from all over the place and sing praises to the Lord. Again, friends, do you see your face in this? That is why, let me just say, that we should have a passion for missions across the world.

It's why mission agencies keep on doing what they're doing. Go into places all across the globe. They've never heard of Jesus. Translate the Bible into the language so that they can hear. What is your confidence in doing that? You're wasting your life? No, you're clinging to promises like this. Remember, we spent a bit of time in Malawi in Africa with an organisation called SIM, Serving and Mission.

[15:08] They have this as their strapline. Why do they do what they do? Making disciples where Christ is least known. What's your confidence? Your confidence is promises like this, that voices from all over the planet are going to be singing praises to the Lord on that day.

I know not why God's wondrous grace to me he hath made known, nor why unworthy Christ in love redeemed me for his own. We've got no idea why God chose us.

But praise him that he did. It's not by our effort. It's by his sheer grace that we can join in this chorus on the last day of our trust is in the Lord. He didn't need to search us out.

And yet he did. What an amazing God this is. Friends, I have to spend time studying this section.

The temperature of the graphic nature of judgment, God's righteous judgment has hotted up.

You've probably seen it as we've tracked it through. But equally, the hope and the joy that God holds out to his people in order that they trust in him and love him, that's hotted up as well.

[16:15] For we wait on him to banish the presence of evil, point one. Point number two. Secondly, we wait on him to bring the kingdom of light. Now, chapter 25 is a song of triumph, is it not?

Oh, Lord, you are my God. I will exalt you. I will praise your name for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. Now, see if ever there was a year where we've realized that our plans, we don't have a clue what's going to happen.

Surely it's been the one that we've just lived through, right? Putting politicians on the spot saying, tell us what's going to happen. You're going to try this out? Tell us it's going to have a success rate. I feel so sorry for our politicians. How are they supposed to know how it's going to turn out? Yet this God plans unfailing since before the beginning of time.

Get that for a track record. Plans unfailing since before the beginning of time. And this is going down exactly as the Lord intends it to go down. And who is the Lord?

[17:18] Verse four. And feel this if you're weary tonight. Who is the Lord? For you have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat.

Friends, take your three S's right there. Stronghold, shelter, shade. That's who he is. For who? For the poor, for those needy and in distress. That's you tonight.

That's who he is. That's who our God is. A God with a heart for the humble, who sees the lowly and the poor and those unable to help themselves, yet looking to him alone for safety and security.

The Lord isn't going to just defend them from their enemies. He will defeat their enemies and his victory will be their victory. And what will he usher in?

Friends, we could spend ages teasing out the beauty of verses 6 to 10 of chapter 25. Go home after this and read it and celebrate it. Right? Let me just really quickly give you two themes that jump out here about God's kingdom of light.

[18:26] On that day, the faithful who've waited on him, what will they enjoy? Two words for you, right? Like feasting. God's not a reluctant host on a budget.

He's not gone to Aldi and picked up the six quid wine. That's what we did on Friday night. The six quid wine that says, that one will do for the feast that I'm going to put on for my people. Nor is this like a Christmas dinner where we often say, don't we, when we have family around, we feel like we needed to have them.

That's not what this God is doing. On this mountain, you see, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

Do you get that? Repetition there, I think, is meant to make us salivate. God will spread for his people and host. Friends, the best banquet that you and I have ever been to.

Rich food, well-aged wine, strained clear. I don't know what that means in wine terms, right? I take it that just means it's the finest of the fine. And this is wedding feast language.

[19 : 39] Because the Lord has longed to be with his people. And to celebrate with his people. And I hope even now just dropping the breadcrumbs, you see where we're going with this one, right?

Feasting, that's your first number, first word. Second word is living. See verse seven? And he will swallow upon this mountain, the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death forever. And the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth. Why?

For the Lord has spoken. So death and all its sting is going to give way to life. And it is intimate language, is it not?

Language of wiping away tears. Friends, if you're crying tonight inside, if you go home tonight, this is what this God is going to do on the last day. Wipe away every tear. Why? Because pain and death and sin will be a distant memory.

[20 : 49] Wiping away tears. Feel the intimacy of that language. You know, this week one of our girls, she had a little nightmare. She comes downstairs. That's what we did as parents.

We're here. We're here. We take her up to our bed, put her down again. We're here. That's the language here, isn't it? What God's going to do as our father. In verse 19 of chapter 26, people reckon it's one of the clearest references to the resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament. Do you see it? Verse 19, chapter 26. Your dead shall live. Their body shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy.

This is who our God is. He is lavish. And he is loving. And so the call from Isaiah, verse 4, to this generation of the Lord's people, urging them to return to the Lord, trusting in his promises.

Do you see? Verse 4, Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is an everlasting rock. He's everlasting.

[21 : 58] He's not going to change. It's not like fashion. It's going to go in and out. It's not like hairstyles are going to come and go. He's an everlasting rock. Wait on him. Trust in him.

Get his word into your systems. No matter what, don't judge things by how they look. It's what the life of faith is, isn't it? Live by what God has said is true. Lean your whole life on that.

And friends, do we not have so much more reason tonight? I guess standing where we do in history, to wait on the Lord. Do we not get just a wonderful foretaste of this kingdom of light in the person and in the life of Jesus?

I take it that is the connection that John wants us to make as we read his gospel. Now, I wonder whether your minds went to John chapter 2 as we read it here.

What does Jesus do as he comes on the scene? John chapter 2, what is his first sign, as John calls it there? He turns water into wine. Not just a neat trick.

[23 : 03] There's way more going on there than that. It's almost John's way of saying, hey, this kingdom, this kingdom that God had promised, do you think it had gone out? Do you think this wasn't going to happen? Here is the one who's come to bring it in.

Got a wonderful foretaste of it. I love that scene in John chapter 2. What is Jesus doing? Abundant, delightful, plentiful, joyful. That is who the Lord is.

Not just a neat trick. It's John way of showing us that the divine bridegroom, the host of the heavenly feast, is here.

And John chapter 11, Mary and Martha lost their brother. Jesus comes on the scene. He delays in going, which is a startling thing.

And yet, is it not true that he delayed so that they would come to know something more of who he is in that moment? And I love it. Jesus gets to the graveside. And those two words, Jesus wept.

[24 : 06] He wept. As he enters our pain, as he enters our world, as he looks at death in the eye and says, that is not the way it's supposed to be.

And is it not amazing that the one who weeps is the one at the end of the Bible story who will wipe away every tear from our eyes? Jesus summons Lazarus out of the tomb and back from the dead. Those three words, Lazarus come out. Now you say, well, what's going on with all the judgment here in Isaiah 24? You kind of swept that under the carpet? No, no, no.

Jesus comes. And of course, friends, he's not swept the sin under the carpet. He goes to the cross. That's John chapter 11. The rest of the gospels is him on the way to the cross to deal with our sin. We deserve to be caught up in Isaiah 24.

Don't we? We do. We deserve to be caught up there. And yet Jesus, because of who he is, his grace, the fact that he loved me, he loved you when we were his enemies, he goes to deal with our

sin on the cross.

[25 : 06] So that this kingdom of light, this kingdom of feasting and living could be a reality for us as he takes our sin on himself, as he dies the death that I deserve to die, as he gives me his life, as he sends his Holy Spirit, friends, to live inside of all who would call him king.

His death becomes our death. His life becomes our life. And on that day, oh dwellers of the dust, awake for joy. Sing for your king is here. The kingdom marked by feasting and marked by living. It's available tonight. It's available now by trusting in Jesus. Yes, that day. Absolutely that day fully. But it is available for us now to know life in him.

Wait on him, friends. Wait on him to make good on his promise. He will do what he says he's going to do. What is this life of waiting going to be marked by?

It's the question we're asking. Okay, we've got to wait, but what's it going to mean for us? I take it they're just really two quick things to see from chapter 26. And I want us to see these. We could have ended it there, but I want us to see these things.

[26 : 21] What will the life of waiting be marked by? Right? Internally, God's people, verse 8 of chapter 26. In the path of your judgments, O Lord, we wait for you.

Your name and remembrance are the desire of the soul. So what is waiting now going to look like for us? It is going to look like lives that are marked by devotion to God's word.

That's the track that we're sticking to. As we read it day after day after day, as we pour our souls over it, as we teach it to our children, as we teach it to our teenagers, as we savor it around the dinner table, as we share it around the hospital bed, as we speak it to one another in our small group, sharing stories of who the Lord is and what he's done.

That is what our lives are going to be marked by internally, a yearning that this would be a reality for us. And it's true, isn't it? It's just like a marathon. Friends, we all get tired in the race.

And we've got to remind one another of the truths that are ahead of us. I love that line by Charles Wesley in his famous hymn, Over a Thousand Tongues. Over a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace.

[27 : 42] Love that phrase at the end, the triumphs of his grace. It's just stories, isn't it? About who God is and what he's like. Stirring the soul to worship. My soul yearns for you in the night.

My spirit within me earnestly seeks you. When your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. Friends, internally, God's people, as we wait, we're going to be marked by that yearning.

It's what you do when you go on holiday, isn't it? And you meet people who are from the place that you've gone to, the place that you're from when you go to. What do you start doing? You start talking about home, don't you? It's a weird thing that we do as human beings.

Start talking about home. It's what we do, friends. This is not our home. That's our home. Natural for us to talk about how great home it is. Do you remember that? Love that.

Love that ice cream. Remember that ice cream? It's what we do, isn't it? We're marked internally, God's people. Also externally, this will be our experience. It will be marked by hardship.

[28 : 44] Oh Lord, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. People aren't going to listen. They're not going to take this seriously.

They're just not going to see it. It feels like that often, doesn't it, friends? Our Christian family, our friends, we tell them, we just don't see it. We tell them about Jesus.

We tell them about the life that we found in Him. We're just not up for seeing it. Speaking to parents in the school playground, I do it all the time, just not going to see it.

It's our experience. They just will not see it. Verse 13, O Lord our God, other lords beside you have ruled over us. They feel the pain of living in a place where God is not honored as Lord.

And yet, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. In other words, in this place where we recognize that the Lord isn't going to be honored as king, what do we do?

[29 : 48] Do we just give up? Do we just, do we just kind of hide away? No, no, no, no. We keep the flag flying. You know what? We're just going to keep on speaking for Him, who He is. You know, whether they're going to listen or not, that's God's business, right?

If He opens their ears, brilliant. We long for them to hear. We long for people to know Him. And yet, do you know what? We're just going to keep waving the flag. We're going to keep testifying to who He is. We're going to keep witnessing to how great Jesus is.

And that's what we're going to do when we're away from home. We acknowledge Him. Friends, wait on the Lord. Wait on Jesus. You know, just as we close, let me just tell you about one of the courses I did at uni.

I did it, I think, over the course of three months. And it was called Understanding Stock Markets. Right? And every day, what the challenge was, it was this game.

We had to go and buy the Financial Times. You went to the uni shop, you got it for 20p, which was a bargain I've subsequently realised. Buy the thing for 20p and you had to every day buy this paper and just track the shares that you'd bought.

[30 : 55] And so, I don't remember a lot about that, but the one thing I remember is our tutor always saying, buy when it's low. Buy when it's low. So what you'd do is you'd circle the one you wanted to buy. Buy it when it's low. And every day, you would track it.

Has it changed tomorrow? No, it's not changed tomorrow. We pay for the next day. Has it changed? Has it gone up? No, it's not gone up. And the whole thing was, is this going to come good in the end? Right? Is this stock, is this company worth waiting for?

Because if it is, I'll hang in there. If it's not, I'm getting out now. Prices went up, went down. Companies went and arrived.

Friends, Jesus, we wait on him. Is he going to come good in the end? Yes, he is. Take it in tonight. Is he worth waiting for? Should we just bail out now?

Friends, he is coming. This is what's ahead of us. Friends, take a good look at Jesus tonight. What is it our souls most need at the beginning of this week? Friends, are you here tonight?

[31 : 55] How are you doing? Are you tired? Are you weary? Are you struggling in the fight? Are you feeling the repetitiveness of life? I'm wondering, is it something I should just keep on going for?

I'll just bail out now. Friends, take in Jesus. Take in who he is tonight and wait on the Lord. Behold, this is our God. We have waited for him that he might save us.

This is the Lord. We have waited for him. Let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Let's pray, shall we? Our Father, we thank you for who you are tonight.

Lord, you are the one who has done wonderful things. You are the one who has plans formed of old, faithful and sure. And Lord, I pray tonight, wherever we are, whatever's going on in our minds, in our hearts, Lord, I pray that you would meet us individually by your spirit.

Lord, with wonderful truths that we've seen tonight. Father, those that should shock us into repenting and running to you, those that should inspire us about what you've promised for the future.

[33 : 06] Father, whatever's going on in our hearts tonight, oh Lord, would you help us to respond rightly? Thank you that you're a God who speaks and you've told us things too marvelous for our minds to comprehend and yet you have spoken.

And so, Father, I pray that you would encourage us tonight with a wonderful picture of who Jesus is. In his name we pray. Amen.