

Prayer for Mercy

Isaiah 63-65.16

Main Idea

Under impending winds of Judgment and Redemption we are taken to school as to how to go about offering a prayer for mercy.

Overview

Judgment and Redemption (Isaiah 63.1-14)

- The One who comes from Edom/Bozrah (historical enemies of Israel) comes from Judgment though they speak in words of righteousness and their ability to save (Redemption) while being dressed in splendor (vss. 1-7)
- In the midst of this call of Judgment and Redemption Isaiah recalls how the Lord has been merciful in times past (vss. 7-14)

Prayer for Mercy (in a time of uncertainty) (Isaiah 63.15-64.12)

- Prayer is the relational connection to God, therefore we see Isaiah going to God in prayer in order to plead for mercy in this time of uncertainty
 - The Lord seems distant from them (63.15)
 - The Faith of Abraham doesn't seem present amongst his people (63.16)
 - Isaiah concludes that the Lord has abandoned them and hardened their hearts as they seem as though they never were ruled by God at all (63.17-19)
- His prayer for mercy is one that comes from a place of caring about all aspects of the situation, it is not faintly connected (vs. 1)
- Isaiah knows who the God that he pleads to is and what He is capable of (vss. 1-4a)
- Isaiah knows why God is ultimately acting therefore that informs his prayer (vs. 2)
 - God acts for the sake of His glory
 - For the sake of His everlasting name (63.12 & 14)
- Isaiah knows whom God listens to (vss. 4b-5)
 - Vs. 4: Those that wait for him (future)
 - Vs. 5: Those that are joyfully working righteousness (present)
 - Vs. 5: Those that remember His ways (past)
- Isaiah remembers what we have done to God in our sin (64.5b-6) (65.3, 7)
- Therefore, Isaiah knows where to put his hope (64.8)
 - Isaiah pleads with the Lord to respond (64.9-12)

The Lord's response (Isaiah 65.1-16)

- The Lord reminds Isaiah that He was ready to be received but no one asked for Him (vss. 1-2)
 - Instead they provoked him, insulted Him and acted as though they were too holy (vss. 3-7)
 - God will still bring forth a people from Jacob/Judah (vss. 9-10)
 - But those that forsake the Lord, forget His Holy mountain, and create a destiny of their own fortune, they will be under the Judgment of 63.1-7
 - There are two realities awaiting them all (vss. 13-16)

Questions

Discussion Starter: How has prayer helped you in times of difficulty? OR Why do you think many people, even those who are not "religious" at other times, pray in the midst of difficulty? What does that tell us about humanity?

1. Read Isaiah 63.1-14. How would you describe the situation in relation to what Isaiah is seeing and feeling?
2. Describe the figure that is coming from Edom and how it might point us to Christ and His Gospel.
3. Describe what Isaiah is doing in verses 7-14. What does this tell us about the importance of remembering God's past grace? What are some practical ways we can do this individually? Corporately?

Take note that Isaiah is moving back into judgment. It's almost as if he wants to keep rehearsing the refrain of Judgment, Hope, Glory. Notice the one coming with judgment comes "alone" and "no one" else could help. He comes with wrath/vengeance and redemption/salvation. In verses 7-14 Isaiah remembers God's steadfast love (that is his covenant love). He looks back at his people's history to remind him of God's past mercy. Get the group to rehearse God's grace to Israel and to us all.

NOTE: Do not get bogged down with 63:17. Notice that it does not say "The Lord made them wander" but is a charge from sinful people against God. We see how the Lord responds in 65:1-6 – he is ready to receive all who will come to him.

From the ESV Study Bible: "Isa. 63:17 why do you make us wander? God did not force his people to sin but, in discipline, gave them over to the power of their sins (cf. Ex. 4:21; Deut. 32:4; Job 34:10; Isa. 6:3, 10; Rom. 1:24, 26). Return. Human repentance requires divine initiative (cf. Ps. 80:14–15; 90:13)."

4. Read Isaiah 63.15-64:12. Work through the prayer and allow it to teach you how to pray in times of difficulty and/or uncertainty.

A couple of notes:

- **"Oh" – begins to reveal the depths of Isaiah's heart. Talk about why we do/don't pray like this.**
- **"Those who wait" – prayer points to the future**
- **"who joyfully works righteousness" – points to the present joyfully obedience to God**
- **"those who remember you ways" – what Isaiah was just doing in 63:7-14.**
- **"we sinned...in our sins...we all have become unclean" – Isaiah is radically honest in his prayer**
 - **65:3, 5, 7 – sin provokes/insults God and thinks you are better than others (i.e. more holy)**
- **"But now..." – He knows his only hope is in the Lord.**

5. Read Isaiah 65. How does the Lord respond and describe the realities of Judgment and Redemption?
6. What are the consequences of Judgment? What are the consequences of Redemption?
7. How does the church experience the benefits of Redemption now as evidenced in these promises and this prayer?

Notice there are ways – the way of judgment and the way of salvation. Some seek the Lord while others forsake him. You may want to end with the promise that the Lord will call his servants by another name and go back and remember God's promises from 62:4.

Accountability: How is your prayer life?