

Sunday Sermon: September 3, 2017

Sermon Text: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

Sermon Theme: A House for all Nations

1. Everyone Needs a Savior 2. A Savior for Everyone

This is what the LORD says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."⁸ The Sovereign LORD declares— he who gathers the exiles of Israel: "I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."

Every year golf hosts one of its biggest tournaments at Augusta National Golf Course in Augusta, Georgia. This tournament always ranks as one of the best of the year with the best golfers, the most beautiful golf course and the most spectators. But every year there is a story that is retold that has not to do with gold. It has everything to do with the membership policies of Augusta National Country Club.

This story tells of the exclusiveness of the club. They have strict rules for membership. You can't even request membership yourself, you need to be sponsored by another person who is already a member. But that isn't even really the story.

Until the 1974, African American golfers were not allowed to play the golf course or the events that were hosted there. There were no African American members of the club until 1990. The first female members of the club were only accepted in 2012.

The story that is retold is not about those who are members of the club, the stories are about who is not allowed to be part of this exclusive club.

It seems like we are getting more and more of that in this world. There are criteria, unwritten rules, stereotypes, and prejudices that separate us into our own little corners and groups of people. There are times that it seems even if we wanted to cross those social, economic, or ethnic barriers, there would be someone who would tell us that we couldn't or shouldn't be allowed to do that.

Is this the type of world that our God wants us to live in? A world which is divided by all of these things?

As we read our sermon text for this morning, we hear God calling out through the prophet Isaiah. God is calling to people of all nations. He doesn't want there to be these divisions caused by sin. God wants his house to be a house of prayer for all nations, where all gather together around him. He wants us to see that everyone needs a Savior and that he has provided a Savior for everyone.

Jesus Sinners Does Receive. What a wonderful statement that we just sang in our sermon hymn. This is something that we should think about, something that we should ponder. That statement, *Jesus Sinners Does Receive*, means a lot for us and for those we live with in this world. It means a lot because we all need a Savior.

Whether we want to admit it or not we are all alike. The Bible supports this statement. The Bible does not tell us we are not different, it tells us that we are alike in many ways.

The Bible tells us we all have common ancestors. We can start with Adam and Eve, but we can also trace our common ancestry through Noah and his family. While we may not talk about everyone as our close family, the Bible uses the word, *neighbor*. It uses this term, this idea so that we do not think of these people who live around us in this world as complete strangers. We should care about them and help them as we help and care for any of our neighbors. There are many, many times that we are taught that we are to love others, our neighbors, as we love ourselves. We are told to pray for others, even those people who persecute us. In short, we are told to love them and treat each other like a family, whether we are distant cousins or close relation.

David tells us in Psalm 139 that we are all alike because we have the same creator. It is God who created us and brought us to life. **"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb."**

Our lives do have a significance that goes beyond what we do and what we become. The fact that God has placed us on this earth is proof that he has a plan in mind for us. This is something that we should never forget about ourselves or any others we live with in this world. God did not create this person or that person to be disposable. He did not create that person to be the subject of scorn and ridicule, he did not create anyone to be nothing or a nobody. He created all of us with a purpose and intent that goes far beyond everyday life.

Paul tells us in Romans that we are all alike because of what we do, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”**

No matter who we are, our ancestry, our background, our culture, the color of our skin, our job skills or our IQ we are all alike because we are all sinners. We all sin against our God and each other every day.

Sin is not just something we do, it is something that we are born with, something that is inside of us, because we are part of the human race. Paul says in our reading for today that we are disobedient to God because of the sin that lives in us. David says, **“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”**

The sin that lives in us shows itself in many different ways. Jesus says, **“Out of the heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”**

Many people have given their strong opinions about why we have these troubles class struggle and culture wars in the world. They say that the answer is very difficult to fully explain, very hard to get to the bottom of. However, the Bible explains what is going on in this world in a very simple way. It is our own sins that causes the problems that we have in society today. It is our selfishness that wants to be first among many. It is that selfishness that makes being better a matter of skin color, occupation, income or stature. It is our own sinful pride that makes us think that because we are who we are, we should stand up for ourselves and fight against anyone that says anything against us. It is that same pride and selfishness that holds on to the wrongs that have been done to us by others and refuse to forgive as Jesus himself tells us we should forgive. It is this sinfulness that loves evil and the chaos, pain and frustration that goes along with sin.

Because of this sin that we all have and freely display there is another way we are alike. Paul says. **“The wages of sin is death.”** We are all alike because sin leads to death. After that death, we will all be alike because whether we want to admit it or not, whether we think there is a God or not, we will all be judged according to God’s standard of perfection.

God will not tolerate our sins or look the other way. Our God will either punish us for our sins or forgive us for Jesus’ sake. There is no in-between. Where there is no faith, there is no forgiveness.

There are many things that we are human beings alike, but the main thing that makes us alike is that we are sinners who need a Savior. Paul says, **“Who will rescue me from this body of death.”**

God calls out through his prophet Isaiah this morning to all people who are sinful and in need of Savior. He is not calling out to a specific group of people, or a specific race or nation. God calls out to all people who because we all need a Savior. **Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—⁷ these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer..... for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”**

God calls out to all people with the same message. Turn to me. Turn away from your sinfulness and I will give you rest. I will give you peace and joy because I will forgive you sins. I will welcome you into my house.

Everyone needs a Savior, and God offers his Savior to everyone. Where there is faith in Jesus, there is forgiveness from sins and peace with God.

There is another one final way that we are alike and this might be the most important way of all. Jesus died to take away the sins of all people. Paul says in Romans, **“God showed his love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”**

In many religions the god will only bless his people after they have made him happy, after they have offered a sacrifice, after they have done something nice for him, after they have pleased him. Not so with our God. While we were still dead in those sins, while we were still fighting against God, while sins were still pouring out of our hearts, God still loved us enough that he sent that Savior to take away the sins of the world.

God does not make it a secret that he wants all people to be saved. He calls out to all people to repent of their sins, no matter what they have done, and he offers to them the forgiveness that only a God and Savior can offer. We see this call to repentance and offer of forgiveness many times in Scripture. Jesus sent his disciples out into the world to preach the message of Christ to all nations, not just a select few. Today in our Gospel, we see Jesus going against the normal Jewish practice of preaching and teaching. He tested the faith of a Gentile woman and called her response, a Great Faith.

These are only two of the many times that God showed his love to unlikely sinners who did not deserve his grace and mercy. This is the same love that God shows to each of us because we are sinners too. If we think that someone else is not worthy to stand in the Lord's house because of who they are and what they have done, then we better realize that we do not deserve to be here either.

We did not do anything to earn or deserve God's grace and neither did they. They needed to have their sins washed away as much as we do. Jesus came to take their sins away as much as he did to take our sins away.

Jesus calls out to all who need a Savior. He says that he has come to forgive sins and bring salvation. As Isaiah says, "...God, **will gather still others besides those already gathered.**" The Holy Spirit brings people of all nations, of all colors, of all cultures to faith in the Lord. He brings them to the foot of the Lord in his house, to repent of their sins and he gives to them the comfort that comes from a Savior who has forgiven their sin.

As we live on this earth, let us not see others as the color of their skin, the class they come from, the clothes they wear, or the amount of money they have, let us look at them as our Savior does. These are souls who are very much like us. They need a Savior from sin, just as we do... and Jesus has come to be that Savior for everyone, just as he has come to be our Savior.

May we have the courage to do the most loving things that we can do and reach out with this message of forgiveness and salvation that Jesus offers and may the Holy Spirit bring many more of the nations to worship in the house of the Lord. *Jesus Sinners DOES receive. Amen.*