

MEDITATION ON ISAIAH 58:1-12

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*Is not this the fast that I choose:  
to loose the bonds of injustice,  
to undo the straps of the yoke,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
and to break every yoke?  
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry  
and bring the homeless poor into your house;  
when you see the naked, to cover them  
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?  
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing shall spring up quickly;  
your vindicator shall go before you;  
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.  
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;  
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."*

*If you remove the yoke from among you,  
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,  
if you offer your food to the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,  
then your light shall rise in the darkness  
and your gloom be like the noonday.  
The Lord will guide you continually  
and satisfy your needs in parched places  
and make your bones strong,  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water  
whose waters never fail.  
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;  
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;  
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,  
the restorer of streets to live in.*

Isaiah's people were hurting, just like we are. They cannot see their future; they do not know if they can survive this. Everywhere is violence, poverty, a people torn apart. For seventy years, they have prayed to God. For seventy years, they have fasted, giving up food at least twice every year. And still, nothing has changed. If they were here today with us, they would ask, "Why do these shootings keep happening? Why do our children,

our parents, our people, keep getting taken from us at the end of a gun, at the end of hate?”

They say, “Where are you, God? Why don’t you stop this?”

Through the prophet Isaiah, God answers. God says, “I’ve been exactly where I’ve always been. I’ve been here with the person whose belly screams with hunger, with the boy bleeding out on the street, with the father slain in a grocery, with the person swallowed by suicide. I’ve been here with the poor, the oppressed, the suffering. Where have you been? That’s the real question. Because I hear your prayers, but I don’t see your action.”

They pray, but their prayer does not change how they live. It does not change their laws. It does not protect the vulnerable among them.

True prayer invites God to speak, and in speaking, to change us, move us, send us. Forgive me, God. Heal me, God. Transform me, God. Use me, God. Show me your vision, God, so that *I can become* your vision.

God calls for a fast, but not from food, from indifference.

God says: Save your piety. Offer me justice, offer me compassion, offer me a child who can live and learn and laugh without being hated for the color of his skin or being afraid of being killed, offer me a father who can purchase a birthday cake for his son and go home safely, offer me your guns bent into plows—and then I will raise you up. Then I will give you life. I will call you repairers of the breach, restorers of the streets to live in.

God speaks today through the prophet Isaiah not only on God’s behalf, but on the behalf of every person who has lost someone to gun violence, to hate. God says for us all: we need more than comfort. We need action. We cannot bring back the ones we’ve lost, but we can, in their memory, fight for the living.

Let’s be clear, though: this call to become repairers of the breach is to an entire people, not an individual. A lot of us are tired. We are worn out. We are traumatized and grieving. We can barely get out of bed in the morning, let alone launch a cultural revolution. We feel helpless. And if we try to do this alone, that’s all we will be. Our society loves the lone hero. But we’ve already got a Savior. We don’t need another one. What we need is a community of disciples who live and work together, who protect each other’s joy and peace, who lean on each other when they are weary, who stand up for each other, who co-labor with Christ, as the body of Christ, to be a world that better reflects the kin-dom of God. The only sustainable path forward is together. We don’t have to build it. Christ already did that. We just have to live it. Together. Amen.