

Isaiah 56 Focus

"For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations..."

Week 7: The Mission of God's House – Friends of the Bridegroom

Background Verses: The prophecy of Isaiah 56 is explicitly **missional** in its focus. It's assumed that everyone knows God's house is a house of prayer from all God has already done and said. The thrust of the prophecy is: a house of prayer **for all**. God wants all who will say yes to covenant with God, to being His and living for His pleasure, to be drawn into His house.

Isaiah 56:4 *For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, 5 Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off. 6 "Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, And to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant—7 Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."*

There is a convergence movement taking place in the earth between prayer and missions, both because God's giving revelation that it is His way and His strategy, and also because Holy Spirit is breathing on the promise of God that this is how the great harvest would unfold.

Amos 9:11 *"On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; 12 That they may possess the remnant of mankind, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the Lord who does this thing.*

What's easy for us to miss, though, is to assign prayer the place of being unto the harvest, which is true – Jesus' pattern for successful mission is to pray the Lord of the harvest – but then miss the bigger story of the harvest being **unto** the filling of God's house of prayer.

Haggai 2:6 *For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple [lit. 'house'] with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.*

Revelation 7:9 *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ... 14 ... "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night **in His temple**. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.*

The mission of the Church is not about inviting people to salvation, but about inviting people to intimacy with God, and in that they will be saved. What compels us (and shapes why and how we do ministry and what our message is) is not just compassion for the lost, but love compels us because they're His and we can't rest until they know it and live it (**2 Corinthians 5:14-17**).

Matthew 22:2 *"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, 3 and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come... 8 Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. 9 Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.' 10 So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

We have only half understood our mission, and will only half fulfill it, if we see the aim of missions as bringing people into the Church and the making of "good Christians" or even "disciple-makers." Our mission as friends of the Bridegroom is to bring people out to meet Him (**Matthew 25:1-13**). Our aim is Jesus and His bride coming together in intimacy, and **our** part is introducing people to Him and letting Him be their reward and them His. Our reward is watching **their** love blossom. **John 3:29** *He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*

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Meditation Passage 1: 2 Corinthians 5:13 *For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. 14 For **the love of Christ compels us**, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new... 20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you **on Christ's behalf**, be reconciled to God.*

Your Thoughts:

Food for Thought: What's your heart motive for missions (aka loving your neighbor), and what would it look/feel like to be compelled by the love of Christ to lay our lives down in pursuit of our neighbors? How are we to see people differently given Christ's love for them? For who's sake do we do missions/ministry? How is it different when it's the voice of Jesus (not the voice of reason or the voice of fear) pleading with men to come back to God?

Meditation Passage 2: John 3:29 *He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. 30 He must increase, but I must decrease.*

Your Thoughts:

Food for Thought: How do you set your heart towards people you're in relationship with / ministering to, if you're mindful that the bride belongs to the Bridegroom? (With all these questions, talk to Jesus about actual relationships and ministry settings in your life.) What does it feel like to rejoice in the Bridegroom's voice as He loves His bride and receives her love? Where do our hearts need to be tuned if that's going to be our reward? How does ministry (not just formal but in every relationship) look different if the point is building love for a Man? How can you make Jesus bigger and you smaller with the people around you that you love and minister to?