

Bible Study #1 – Isaiah 58 –

How do you find insight into this scripture...

1. ... by simply hearing it, devotionally...

2. ... by understanding something of the time and place of Isaiah, and of the people to whom he was preaching? (Historical insights)

3. ... by looking carefully at the way the sermon is put together,

4. ... by reading the sermon through the lens and insights of Lutheran Theology – *(such as these – not exhaustive!)*
 - law and gospel
 - justification by grace
 - Christ as the Living Word, scripture points us to Christ

Bible Study #2 – Isaiah 58 –

For Discussion:

- Take time to re-read Isaiah 58: 1-12 individually

- In what ways are we “choosing the wrong fast” today?

- We tend to read the passage as an appeal for individual compassionate response. Isaiah is speaking to the people of Judah as a *people*. We need to think of this as a call to “choose to fast” as God would choose... *as a people*. What is this saying to
 - your congregation?
 - your community?
 - our life together as a state?
 - Is ***A Common Foundation*** a clear/adequate statement of a faithful people’s response to Isaiah 58?
 - How can we most effectively be ***A Synod At Table with the Hungry?***

- What would you say is the “breach” most in need of repair in our time and place? How are we called to be repairers of the breach?

- And, finally, cycling back to yesterday’s study – how is this *both* law and gospel?

A Common Foundation

Shared Principles for Work on Overcoming Poverty

As a people of faith, with varying theologies and traditions, we are convinced of a remarkable convergence on fundamental principles that call us to common work in combating poverty and walking with people living in poverty:

- We believe it is the Creator's intent that all people are provided those things that protect human dignity and make for healthy life: adequate food and shelter, meaningful work, safe communities, healthcare, and education.
- We believe we are intended to live well together as a whole community, seeking the common good, avoiding wide disparities between those who have too little to live on and those who have a disproportionate share of the world's goods.
- We believe we are all called to work to overcome poverty, and that this work transcends both any particular political theory or party and any particular economic theory or structure. We believe that overcoming poverty requires the use of private and public resources.
- We believe we are called to make alliances within the faith community and with others in society who share the commitment to overcome poverty.
- We believe that overcoming poverty involves both acts of direct service to alleviate the outcomes of poverty and advocacy to change those structures that result in people living in poverty.
- We believe government is neither solely responsible for alleviating poverty, nor removed from this responsibility. We believe government is the vehicle by which people order their lives based on their shared vision. We believe society is well served when people of faith bring their values into the public arena. It is this remarkable convergence around issues of poverty and the common good that leads people of varying faith traditions to unite in calling on government to make a critical commitment to overcoming poverty.
- We believe the desire to overcome poverty is not simply a human idea, but is the desire of our Creator, and that the work to create a more just and whole society will be empowered by the Creator's presence.

We invite each faith tradition to make explicit their expression of faith and how it understands this common foundation. On these shared principles, we together commit ourselves to work to ensure that no person is forced to live in poverty.

Isaiah 58:1–12

Shout out, do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

²Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments,
they delight to draw near to God.

³"Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?"

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day,
and oppress all your workers.

⁴Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

⁵Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,

a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶Is not this the fast that I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷Is 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?

⁸Then 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.

⁹Then 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,
¹⁰if 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.

¹¹The 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.

¹²Your 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.