

Isaiah 8:1-9:7 - Our Hope

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[0:00] Good morning. Our passage today is in Isaiah chapter 8 and then up until 9 verse 7 which is on page 693 in the church bibles.

! The Lord said to me, take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen, Meher Shalal Hashbaz. So I called in Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jebrakiah as reliable witnesses for me.

Then I made love to the prophetess and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the Lord said to me, name him Meher Shalal Hashbaz. For before the boy knows how to say, my father or my mother, the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.

The Lord spoke to me again, because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shaloha and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Romalia.

Therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of Euphrates. The king of Assyria with all his pomp, it will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it.

[1:16] Passing through it and reaching up to the neck. Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, Emmanuel. Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered.

Listen, all you distant lands. Prepare for battle and be shattered. Prepare for battle and be shattered. Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted.

Propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us. This is what the Lord says to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people.

Do not call conspiracy everything this people calls a conspiracy. Do not fear what they fear and do not dread it. The Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy.

He is the one you are to fear. He is the one you are to dread. He will be a holy place for both Israel and Judah. And he will be a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.

[2:17] And for the people of Jerusalem, he will be a trap and a snare. Many of them will stumble. They will fall and be broken. They will be snared and captured.

Bind up this testimony of warning and seal up God's instruction among my disciples. I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob.

I will put my trust in him. Here am I and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty who dwells on Mount Zion.

When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land.

[3:15] When they are famished, they will become enraged and looking upwards will curse their king and their God. Then they will look towards the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom.

They will be thrust into utter darkness. Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali.

But in the future he will honor Galilee and the nations by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light. On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned.

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy. They rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's feast you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their

oppressor, every warrior's boot used in battle, and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[4:37] Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness.

From that time on and forever, the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. Amen. Great.

Well, keep that passage open. We are in the book of Isaiah.

We have been working our way through it. We have arrived at chapter 8. Let's pray and ask for the Lord's help as we come to his word. Let's pray. Father, we do thank you so much for your word to us.

We want to thank you that we're not kind of scrabbling around in the dark, wondering what you might be like or what you might say, but that here together this morning, as your word is open, we get a chance to listen to you, to hear your word to us.

Oh Lord, how we pray that you might make us good listeners to you and your word. Pray that you might help me to speak clearly and faithfully. And Lord, that by your spirit, you would be at work, opening our ears to hear and our hearts to trust.

[5:46] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, if you're a Christian this morning, what you need to understand is that you are in the minority.

The minority. Probably not in this room, at least I don't think so. But almost certainly at work, you'll be in the minority. You're possibly in the minority in your family.

And if you are at school, you will definitely be in the minority. I was trying to work out this week with a little help from the census, how many people in our neighborhood find themselves in a gospel church this morning.

If you go to the census, I think it's about 35%, maybe a few more, call themselves Christians in our neighborhood. But to call yourself Christian doesn't necessarily really mean you are a Christian. It just means that's how you identify yourself. And very few actually mean much by it. I think if you add up the congregations in our community, kind of places where you would hear the good news about Jesus, and you divide that by the population of our community, times by 100, that's how you work out percentages, right?

[6:54] I think you will get to about 3%. 3%. Put it another way, 97% of people in Queen's Park and West Kilburn are somewhere else doing something else this morning, with little or no thought of being otherwise.

Which means I think by any count, we are a minority. Now, it's possible that that's quite shocking. I think as Christians, we've become quite adept to just sort of inoculating ourselves from this idea that we're in the minority.

We might cover up the detail in all sorts of ways. You might find that all of your friends are Christians, so you just imagine that actually everybody's a Christian, because all my friends are. You might go to the odd big conference, where it feels like you're part of something much bigger and much grander.

If you follow the right feeds on social media, you might get the impression that there is something bigger and more impressive. You might even console yourself that 2 billion people around the world would call themselves Christians, and that's no small number, is it?

But actually, there are 6 billion people in the world who would say they are not Christian. Because the truth is, being a Christian, a genuine I-believe-in-Jesus Christian, puts you this morning, if that's you, in a minority.

[8:18] And if you live in this neighbourhood, in this time, then it puts you in a very, very, very small minority. Now, I want to suggest that because that is true, Isaiah's book is of supreme relevance to us this morning.

Isaiah is writing between 700 and 800 years before the birth of Christ in a setting where God's people are in a massive minority. Now, that's not just because Judah and Jerusalem, to whom he is speaking, are no longer the world superpower that they once were, although that is true, right?

You will find in the weeks to come that King Ahaz has put himself in the pocket of the king of Assyria. And that's a bad place for him to be, and he never really recovers. And Israel, Judah, never really recovers.

But also, it's because most of the people of Judah are only now really God's people in name, but not really in personal faith or trust in the Lord.

They are Jews, they are the children of Abraham, but most of them do not trust the Lord. Most of them have the same hopes, the same aspirations, the same goals, and the same idols, even, as the world around them.

[9:30] And so God's people find themselves in a minority, not just in the world, but even in the people that would call themselves God's people. And that's why one of Isaiah's favorite words, and I know it's one of his favorite words, because he calls his oldest child this, is the word remnant.

Remnant, that's what he calls the minority. It's a small remainder, a little slice, a small group of people amongst God's people who still actually trust the Lord.

His oldest son is called Sher Jashub. He says, which means the remnant will return. We met him last week, if you were with us. Now, we'll return to those ideas in a few moments, but what I want to show you is that the passage that we're looking at this morning, it divides really helpfully into three parts, and we will work our way through them and see these ideas there.

So in verses one to eight, in chapter eight, you get a kind of narrative account of what's happening at the time. In verses nine to 22, you get the details of this minority group, this remnant and what marks them out, how you recognize them, what makes for them to be a remnant group.

And then in verses one to seven of chapter nine, you see something of the hope for the remnant.

So let's start part one with the story, the story in verses one to eight. Now, if you were with us last week, and someone did say to me last week that this was confusing, and I tried really hard to explain it simply, but I obviously didn't do a great job.

[10:52] But you'll know that the southern state of Judah, so God's people have been divided into Judah and Israel, Judah in the south, Israel in the north, and the southern community of Judah with Jerusalem as its capital city are now being threatened by Syria, which is called Aram in the story, and by Israel, which is sometimes called Ephraim.

They formed an alliance together, and they have threatened Judah and Jerusalem. And that has put King Ahaz in a flap. And we found him last week like that, and Isaiah came to him and spoke God's word to him.

And he told Ahaz, listen, I want to tell you, you must listen to God. And in order to persuade you to listen to God, there will be a sign. Ask for a sign. Ahaz refused.

God gave him a sign anyway, and the sign was a child. And now as you pick up chapter eight, verse one, you find in verse one that Isaiah is taking out a large scroll, a banner, a placard of some kind, and he's writing the name Meher Shalal Hashbaz on it.

And he's calling Uriah and Zechariah to witness to it in verse two. In some ways, this is kind of like a gender reveal party, although the gender's already been revealed. It's a name reveal party.

[12:08] And Isaiah is going early on the name. He is placarding the name of his new child around. Meher Shalal Hashbaz means something like speed, spoil, haste, booty.

It's a reference to the coming Assyrian army. They're going to come really fast, and they're going to take all of the spoil. And effectively, the placard, I guess, means in some senses, like, the end is nigh.

Yeah, you know those placards that people call, the end is nigh. That's basically what the placard is saying to the northern kingdoms of Israel and Syria. In verse three, you hear that the son is born to Isaiah's wife.

Then I made love to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the Lord said to me, name him Meher Shalal Hashbaz. And just like God promised, before the child even knows or understands what an army is, the threat of Israel and Syria invading Judah has gone.

Assyria, the swift, spoil, haste, booty kingdom, has swept through it and defeated the two nations. Verse five then picks up the story as the Lord himself tells it.

[13:16] The Lord spoke to me again. Because this people, that is the people of Israel, has rejected the gentle flowing waters of Shiloah, that is the stream that's flowing into Jerusalem, and rejoices over Rezin, that is the king of Syria or Aram, and the son of Ramalia, that is the king of Israel.

Therefore, the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty waters of the Euphrates, the king of Assyria with all his pomp. It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks, and sweep into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it, and reaching up to the neck.

Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land, Emmanuel. The key to those verses, I think, is understanding those gentle flowing waters of Jerusalem. So while Jerusalem itself, we found, it was a fortress city.

It had been reinforced by King Uzziah. Still, the water supply for Jerusalem was kind of flaky. It was this waters of Shiloah.

And here the people are, effectively, they're looking at God's water supply into Jerusalem and going, that will never work. That will never stand. That will never be enough.

[14 : 30] And so they turn to the strength of their alliance. And then in what is some kind of, I guess, tragic irony, they discover, actually, that the God who is the God of the gentle flowing waters of Shiloah, who is supplying Jerusalem, is also, it turns out, the God of the great river Euphrates.

And so God turns the river Euphrates and floods them. That river is a metaphor for the Assyrian army. And they wash away Syria, they wash away Israel, and they even come through Judah and up to the neck of Jerusalem itself.

And that's exactly what happens. The Assyrian army marches down the coast, cuts off the supply lines of the Northern Alliance, and then destroys them completely. About 20 years later, working their way through Judah, they capture the cities and they get right to the gates of Jerusalem, which they fail to take.

I want you just to imagine, I know this, it all feels very distant, doesn't it? But I want you to try and imagine with me, if you can, just what it might have been like to live there. You know, you're having a chat with one of your office colleagues, or whatever the equivalent is of an office in, you know, 700 BC.

And you're by the water cooler, again, whatever the equivalent is of that. And you know, one of your colleagues says to you, do you believe in all that God stuff? Really? Do you believe all that stuff about, you know, Jerusalem being safe?

[15 : 53] Do you believe that? Do you believe that God will keep his people? I know that's what they say, isn't it? They say that God has this promise to look after his people. Do you believe that? That Ahaz really just has to do nothing but trust the Lord and everything will be okay?

Do you believe that? Well, the conversation carries on, doesn't it? And everyone's answer is exactly the same. Of course I don't believe it. What a complete load of rubbish. Have you seen the water supply in Jerusalem? It's terrible.

It's pathetic. It won't stand up to anything. And so you think, well, okay, I'm listening to this conversation and choices are hard to make, aren't they? It's difficult to make decisions and so basically I'm just going to do what everyone else does.

I'm just going to believe what everyone else believes. And it turns out to be horribly wrong because it turns out that most people were wrong and the remnant were right.

Now, I want to suggest to you that's exactly what you see happening around you all the time today. What do you think about Jesus? Do you really think Jesus is divine? Yeah, Christians say that Jesus is coming again to judge the living and the dead.

[16 : 56] Do you believe that? Really? I mean, just look around you. Everything seems to carry on as normal. People who don't believe in Jesus, they seem to have perfectly good lives. In fact, in some ways, they seem to have better lives. This cross and resurrection stuff, is that really important?

Is that what life is for? No, of course it's not. You know, my friend's nephew's brother, sister, has read a bit of the Bible and they think they've found contradictions in it.

And so, because choices and decisions are hard to make, most people just go with the flow and they reject Jesus. And like Syria and Israel, they will find themselves to be horribly wrong.

Jesus himself said, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it. That's part one, the history or the story of what's been happening. Israel and Syria are defeated by Assyria before Isaiah's son is able to say mummy or daddy. The majority are in the wrong.

[18 : 06] Then comes part two, the marks of the remnant. verses 9 to 22 of chapter 8. Now, I think you would be okay to be a little confused by these verses at first. They do dot around the place.

Sometimes Isaiah seems to be speaking to himself. It's almost like you're reading from Isaiah's personal spiritual journal. And sometimes he's talking to a group of disciples. It seems to be a group of people he's gathered around him.

Other times he's quoting the Lord directly. But the big idea here that I want you to capture is that Isaiah, as opposed to the rest of the people, is trusting in the Lord.

And along with Isaiah trusting the Lord are a small group of others who are doing the same. So what you have is a nation that is in the large part in rebellion against God and then a small remnant who are remaining faithful with Isaiah at the heart of it.

The majority going one way and a small group of faithful men and women going the other. Now, instead of walking through verse by verse, let's just pull out two marks of this remnant.

[19:08] The first mark is this, they listen to the Lord and not people. Let me pull out some verses for you. Look at your Bibles. Look down at verse 10. Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted.

Propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us. Comes again in verse 13 where Isaiah says, the Lord Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy. He is the one you are to fear.

He is the one you are to dread. In other words, don't dread people, dread the Lord, fear the Lord, not people. You see it too in a negative way that they talk about the hopes of the masses around them.

Turn over the page to verse 19. When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

Here they're mocking the whispers and the mutterings or the squeaks and moans is more literal, I think, of the mediums and the spiritists. Comparing it to the word of God that they heard.

[20:06] This is the mark of the remnant marked out from the rest of the nation. This is a group of people who despite the attitudes and the convictions of the world around them, they have chosen to listen to what God says.

They have come to the conclusion that God with them is better than the world with everyone else. That's what they concluded. that the world is wrong and God is right.

Now, you're to hear that and you're to ask, I think, why on earth would they do that? What would persuade this small group of people against the opinion of everybody else that they should listen to God? what is it that they have seen that everyone else has missed?

Well, it's not so much what they have seen, is it? It is what they have heard. So, in verse 11, you find that the strong hand of the Lord is on Isaiah and the Lord speaks to him, warning the people of the way to follow.

And Isaiah listens and he trusts God and he trusts what he says. He fears the Lord and not people. See, this is Isaiah's radical claim. It's the claim of the whole Bible, which is that the world is ruled by a God you cannot see.

[21:19] A God who made you, who loves you, who will hold you to account. You cannot discover that God under a microscope. You cannot discover him with a telescope. But you can discover him through what he says, through his word.

And faith in him comes from hearing him. The evangelist, the late Billy Graham, tells a story of being challenged by a friend about the reliability of the Bible.

A friend told him in 1949 that he was out of date. He said to Billy Graham, listen, no one believes the Bible anymore. What? It's ridiculous. Don't you know that science has disproved the Bible?

And Billy Graham tells the story that that night he couldn't sleep and so he got up and he went for a walk. He took his Bible with him. He got into the middle of the woods and he put his Bible down on a tree stump and there he prayed.

He records his prayer like this. He says, oh God, there are many things in this book that I do not understand. There are some areas in it that don't seem to correlate with modern science, but Father, I'm going to accept this as your word by faith.

[22:31] I'm going to allow faith to go beyond my intellectual questions and my doubts. I will believe this to be your inspired word. He stood up from his knees on that August night with tears in his eyes and he says, I sensed the presence and power of God as I had not sensed it in months.

Not all my questions were answered, but I knew that a spiritual battle in my soul had been fought and won. That's Isaiah, right? God, I will listen to you.

I cannot see you, but I can hear you and I will listen. And that's Billy Graham and that's Isaiah. Is that you?

Is that you? Are you basically deciding what to trust based on what you see or based on what other people see? Or are you listening to what God says in his word?

That's the first mark of the remnant. The second mark is that they are waiting for the Lord. Look down at verse 17 of chapter 8. I will wait for the Lord who is hiding his face from the descendants of Jacob.

[23 : 35] I will put my trust in him. Here am I and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty who dwells on Mount Zion.

Notice what this means. Isaiah's here with the signs and symbols of his children. That's Sher Jashub whose name means the remnant will return and Meher Shalal Hashbaz who's referring to the Syrian army being really fast and quick and taking all the spoil.

But he does not yet have what God has promised. He actually says God is hiding his face. In other words he is waiting. He doesn't have everything.

According to verse 20 as he's waiting the people around him are living in ignorance of God's word. They have no light. In verse 21 people are even angry with God and cursing God. People are full of fearful gloom in verse 22.

This is the world in which Isaiah is waiting. It's a tough world. It's a dark world. And they're in the minority and the minority even feel like God might be hiding. This is Isaiah's world.

[24 : 38] This is our world too, right? We've seen more of the fulfillment of God's promises than Isaiah had. We know that the Assyrian army did destroy the Northern Alliance.

We know too that after them the Babylonian empire came and they destroyed the Assyrians and that after them and after a few others the Roman empire came and occupied Jerusalem and they crucified the Son of God.

But we're still waiting for Christ's return. We're still waiting for his returning glory. We're still living in a place and a time where most people reject God and it's not led to happiness but to a new kind of misery and darkness.

You and I live, don't we, in a world where the rich seem to get richer, the poor seem to get poorer, everyone seems to be out for themselves. We live in a world where it's sometimes dangerous just even to walk down the street at night.

We live in a world dominated by false religion, false hope, false gods and shallow morality and this world, the world in which we live, it can still sometimes feel like God is hiding, can't it?

[25 : 46] And to be part of the remnant is not to be sheltered from those things, it is to trust God whilst waiting in the darkness. I don't know about you but I'm not brilliant at waiting and I have to practice it because I spend a lot of time waiting it seems.

I have a wife who's not always brilliant at timekeeping. But you know, don't you, when you're waiting for stuff that you go through a whole range of emotions, don't you? At first, you're not that bothered. You know, well, they're a bit late, it's okay. Then you get into sort of like anger. I can't, does my time mean nothing to them?

What are they waiting, why are they making me wait? And then you get kind of emotional and just sad and frustrated and slightly depressed. But if you, if you came to me and you saw me going through those range of emotions, what would you say?

I think you'd say, listen, that's just a feature of waiting, Steve. That's just a feature of waiting. Listen, you this morning, you might find your Christian life hard.

[26 : 56] It might be difficult. Reading your Bible might feel like a slog. Going to school where you're the only Christian might feel really isolating. In your family, it might be really difficult because you're the only one who's a Christian and everyone else around you thinks it's a bit stupid, really.

Why are you going to church again? Well, listen, that's what waiting's like. That's what waiting's like. Waiting in the darkness. And, you know, there are times of relief, aren't there?

Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings are supposed to be like that, right? It's the Lord's day. It's not his half day, right? It's his full day, right? You can come morning and evening. But still, you won't find it easy.

You will still find at times that you might think, maybe I've got this wrong. What is God doing? And that's what waiting's like. So let's look at part three, the hope for the waiting or the hope we are waiting for.

If you look down at verse one of chapter nine, you'll see that there is great hope for the remnant walking in the darkness of this world. Nevertheless, there'll be no more gloom for those who are in distress.

[28:01] In the past, he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future, he will honor Galilee of the nations by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan. The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. Notice what Isaiah does here. He's speaking to the people. He's speaking especially, I think, to the remnant. And he tells them, listen, there is a time, I know you're waiting, but there is a time coming when the light will break through the darkness.

But so confident is Isaiah that this light will break through the darkness that he speaks as if it's already happened. The verbs are in the past tense. And suddenly, Isaiah is so certain, I can talk as if it's already here, that in the humble territories of God's people, Zebulun and Naphtali and Galilee, a light will come from there.

The small remnant will become a great nation in verse three, and there will be great rejoicing, like people at a bumper harvest, like the kids in the sweet shop. That day will be like Gideon's victory over Midian in verse four, when the oppression and the burden on God's people was lifted.

In verse five, the victory will be final because no one will need warrior boots and clothes anymore. They will be burned. There will be fuel for the fire. But the point here is not so much about the great victory.

[29:19] The light is not the great victory, is it? The light is a person, as it turns out. Not Isaiah's children, who in verse 18 are just signs and symbols, but the fulfillment of those signs and symbols.

Not just a sign that God is with us, but actually God with us. Verse six, for to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders.

He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Just think about those names for a moment. This is the light. I know you're waiting, but this is the light.

A Wonderful Counselor is coming. It doesn't mean Counselor like the person that you sit down and talk to and tell all your problems. That's not the kind of Counselor. It's the Counselor as in the person who knows what they're doing. The wise one, the wonderfully wise one will come.

He'll be Mighty God, God's power here, Everlasting Father, like a father caring for his children, Prince of Peace, the Restorer of the Remnants Peace.

[30:20] Here's Isaiah's big point, the light you are waiting for. This is the light you are waiting for, says Isaiah. God will come, and he will be your king.

The one that you are waiting for, the one of whom's government will know no end. He will reign on David's throne forever in verse 7, establishing and upholding justice and righteousness forever.

This is God. This God, the God whose glory fills the earth in Isaiah 6 is humble to a baby, Emmanuel, who's kind of mentioned in Isaiah 7, is now the warrior king of Isaiah 9, come in the zeal of the Lord to accomplish the plans of God.

Now Isaiah, remember, he's speaking as a prophet, isn't he? He's looking forward to the coming of Christ. And Matthew 4 quotes Isaiah 9 at the start of Jesus' ministry, telling us that Jesus' preaching is the beginning of the dawn of the coming of this light.

Jesus is the one that Isaiah promised. You know that, don't you? Because we read this at Christmas, you knew that already. But Jesus is the one promised. And it's transfiguration, you see, don't you, that Jesus' humanity and his divinity are in one person of the sun, two natures, one not obliterating the other.

[31:35] The God of glory carried in humanity. The mighty God is the child of the virgin. The everlasting Father is on the throne of David.

Emmanuel is with his people. And then you go, don't you, from the shining brilliance of the transfiguration, to the darkness of the cross. What's happened? What has happened to Isaiah's light?

The darkness and gloom of a world of sin is laid on the shoulders of the light of the world. The great light is extinguished until three days later, the light of the world walks alive in flesh from the tomb, victorious over sin and death, leaving not so much warrior's boots and garments as fuel for the fire, but leaving grave clothes.

I don't need those anymore. We don't need those where we're going. And then he leaves, ascending into glory, sending his spirit and promising to return so that you and I are waiting for Christ's second coming in the same way as Isaiah and his remnant were waiting for his first coming.

So the Apostle John does an Isaiah for us, right? He says, listen, I know it's difficult. I know you're in the tribulation. I know life is hard. I know you're waiting, but picture this, says the Apostle John.

[32:55] Revelation 19, verse 11, he says this, I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider was called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.

His eyes are like blazing fire. On his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but himself. He is dressed in a robe, dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations.

He'll rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has the name written King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

Let me end with this. I wonder whether in Isaiah's day, the problem for most people in Isaiah's day is that their hopes were just too shallow. Most people were hoping for just a better King Ahaz.

[33:57] That's what they wanted. I just want a king who basically doesn't sell out to foreign nations. I want a king who has some kind of chance of ruling this nation with some kind of wisdom and intelligence, who doesn't kind of just trade our livelihoods for his personal gain.

And Isaiah kind of says to the remnant, doesn't he, don't hope for that. Let me tell you what to hope for. Hope's made for something bigger than that. You don't want just a better King than Ahaz.

You want God to be King. That's what you want. You want a divine King. You want God with us.

You know, most people, I think to date, they're not interested in Jesus because they think that they would be fully satisfied if only they just could have the home that they really wanted or the friends that they really wanted or the marriage that they really wanted or if only we could have well-behaved children or a bank account full of money or a decent reputation.

And then the tragedy is that some people sell Christianity as if it's mostly designed to deliver those things. But actually, if those are the things you're hoping for, you're better off going somewhere else because you're not promised those things in Christianity.

The Bible says you need to hope for something better than that. There is something bigger and better to hope for. Your hope, if you will trust in God's promise, is that you will personally look into the glorious face of the God-man, Jesus, the one alone who can truly satisfy you, the one whose counsel is wonderful, the one whose power is mighty, the one whose very presence chases away evil and death and brings eternal peace and glory, the one whose glory and joy will last not just for a lifetime, however long or short that might be for us, but for eternity.

[35:53] This is why it's okay, isn't it, to be in the minority this morning. It's okay to be in the minority. In fact, it's the best place to be because popularity now is no substitute for glory later.

Small hopes now are no substitute for God with us. You know, my plans now, my popularity now are no substitute for eternal hope and glory in Jesus.

And so we live, don't we? We wait, listening to his word, waiting in the darkness for the light to return. Let me pray as I close.

Amen. Heavenly Father, we want to pray that you would forgive us for the times where we have made decisions about the very most important things in life just based on what those around us are doing.

we want to be better at listening to what you say in your word, trusting in you and doubting what our eyes see and what others say.

[37:17] And so, Lord, we thank you for this wonderful hope in Jesus, the one who conquered sin and death. And we want to pray that you would help us to live our lives listening to him in your word and waiting for his return.

Please, Lord, keep us faithful. Keep us going. I pray especially for those this morning who do find themselves in a really significant minority in their places of work or school or home.

Please give them grace and courage and strength to keep going and keep trusting as we wait for Christ's return. In his name we pray. Amen.

Amen.