**The Conquering King**

Isaiah 63

Isaiah ends the way history ends - with **justice and joy**. Look at Isaiah 66:14

“You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.” Isaiah 66:14

Remember back in Isaiah 40 God spoke COMFORT to His people? Again, in verse 13 of chapter 66, God promises to comfort His people. ***Discipline and judgment was coming soon for the nation of Israel***. 70 years of exile in Babylon was coming in one generation. But beyond that time of discipline God promised restoration that would represent His final renewal of all things at the end of history.

Like Israel, **we are in a time of great difficulty and challenge**. We are in exile, of sorts - far from the Lord, far from the promised land. But God speaks these words of comfort to us, His children - that the day will come soon when we will rejoice in Him, when we will flourish as we see the hand of the Lord. And one of the things that will lead us to rejoice is the justice of God we will finally see.

Justice and Joy are not two separate things - they are inextricably connected in the good plans of God. A large part of our joy will be in the final justice we see. I have long struggled with **the last words of Isaiah’s book**.

“And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.” Isaiah 66:24

If you or I had been writing this prophecy we might have stopped after verse 23 “all flesh shall come and worship before me, declares the Lord.” Or we would have prayed and asked God to give us one more verse, to - you know - end on a little more upbeat sort of note. Maybe Isaiah did offer that request and the Holy Spirit said, ‘Nope. That’s the ending.’

“An abhorrence to all flesh.” Okaaaay. This made perfect sense to the Jews in Isaiah’s time. It was what all conquering armies did. ***After a battle you left your enemies exposed*** - you left their bodies out to rot in the sun and be eaten by the birds. You gathered in the dead of your people and buried them properly. But part of the shame of losing a battle was that your dead were dishonored - they were left out exposed as a reminder to all looking on of your failure and defeat.

The point to see here is that **JUSTICE will be a big part of our joy** in the last battle and for all of eternity. It’s not just that the dead bodies are there - it’s that all people will go out and see the dead bodies and agree together that those enemies of God deserved what they got.

What we will see in the final chapters of Isaiah is the promise of JOY for all of God’s people, including many from the nations. This will be **a three-fold joy in God’s love, justice, and peace**. Let’s look at each of these three parts in turn.

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, permanent **Justice** of God

“Behold, your salvation comes; behold his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.” Isaiah 62:11

Oh brother, sister - our salvation is coming and indeed has come. And this salvation is not impersonal but is ***in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ***. HIS reward is with him, his recompense before Him.

Hebrews tells us that **FAITH requires two parts** - first believing that God exists and second, believing that He rewards those who seek Him. Faith is counting on a reward. Jesus called it treasure in heaven; eternal life; living water. There will be great reward for all who trust in and serve King Jesus. And there will be great suffering for all who do not.

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, permanent **Justice** of God

“Who is this who comes from Edom… he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength?” Isaiah 63:1

Isaiah 63 presents **a conquering warrior** marching into Jerusalem covered in blood - not his own blood, but the blood of his defeated enemies - in this case, the blood of Edom, one of the historic enemies of God’s people. Then, the triumphant warrior king speaks:

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, permanent **Justice** of God

“It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.” Isaiah 63:1

Israel has always been surrounded by dangerous enemies - powerful empires to the south, north and east. Some powerful tribes within the holy land itself. No doubt that was very deliberate by God. ***He knows how to play RISK*** - that no one ever chooses to hold ASIA or EUROPE. You always want Australia or South America, for sure. RISK 101. The fewer places to defend the better. God wanted His people depending on Him for their safety from the very beginning.

Isn’t this so relatable for us? We feel assaulted on every side! Dangers everywhere. And that keeps us trusting in our Conquering King who speaks to us in perfect righteousness, for ***HE ALONE is mighty to save***.

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, permanent **Justice** of God

“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me.” Isaiah 63:3

***You will not get PERFECT Justice or lasting justice from anyone on this earth***. You will hopefully get partial justice and temporary justice if you ever need that in a courtroom - but I guarantee it will not be totally satisfying and it will not last forever. Only King Jesus can promise that.

This is a preview of **the Return of Christ** when He will finally and fully defeat all His enemies forever. And, of course, He will do it alone. Who could possibly help Him?

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, permanent **Justice** of God

“For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.” Isaiah 63:4

***If you have suffered some injustice*** - some pain or loss - just know that perfect justice is coming from King Jesus when He comes back. This will be part of our joy in the Lord forever and ever - seeing the evil get what is coming to them. They may get away with it their entire earthly life - but they will not escape the sword of justice forever. Skip ahead to chapter 66.

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, permanent **Justice** of God

“For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury…” Isaiah 66:15

Drug cartels and human trafficking kingpins, **gang warlords and evil dictators** seem to rule in power all over the world right now. But their rule will be short. And their power will one day soon be cut off. And all their weapons of war, all of their apparent wealth and strength will come to nothing before King Jesus when He shouts ***His final command: “ENOUGH!”***

This world is like the storm in which the disciples were caught up on the Sea of Galilee. Chaos and darkness reign. But one day King Jesus will shout, ***“Peace. Be still.”*** And everyone - from the least to the greatest on earth - will immediately freeze. Every knee will bow. Every eye will look upon the true King. And every tongue in that moment will confess that there is only One true and Almighty King.

**The fire of final judgment is coming**. Know that King Jesus will right every wrong and pay out perfect justice in the end. This is why we do not need to avenge ourselves - and why we can pray for our enemies and bless those who persecute us. Because we know the One who says, “It is mine to avenge. I will repay.” Leave Justice to the King. And rejoice to know that His justice will be perfect and it will last forever. Second:

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God

“I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD.” Isaiah 63:7

Back in chapter 63 it’s **an abrupt change of theme and tone**. Verse 6 - “I trampled down the peoples in my anger… I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.” It’s the Imperial March of Darth Vader at full volume… And then suddenly into Leah’s theme - quiet and peaceful. “I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord.” It’s blazing trumpets giving way to quiet strings. It’s the fire of justice turning suddenly into the quiet waters of love.

But, of course, ***justice and love go together and are actually inseparable*** - as much as our culture desperately wants to take them apart. Every parent knows this is the case. If you love your children, you will do everything in your power to protect them. You will fight evil and injustice tooth and nail like Darth Vader. Just mess with a second grader and ***see what a Mama Bear looks like*** in a towering rage. “You took my son’s PB&J? I am going to hog tie you and roast you on a spit! Another kid looked at my daughter sideways - sound the alarm for bullying and call in the national guard! You marked her down from a 93 to a 91 - from an A to an A-, I’m taking this to the Supreme Court!” Moms look all sweet and compassionate until you mess with their kiddos. Then the rage gets unleashed. It’s almost fun to watch as long as you’re not on the receiving end.

This is the reality with God - if He loves His children, He must hate and rage against anyone and anything that threatens His children. That’s what love does. ***The opposite of love is not hate - it is indifference.***

What would you think of a Dad on the couch, absently clicking through channels while his daughter is abused in the next room? You would seethe with anger at the apathy and lack of attention. What would you think of a Mom at the spa, paying for an expensive massage while her small kids are at home, hungry and without food?

***Love and justice go together.*** And our eternal joy in the Lord will celebrate the perfect love and perfect justice of God!

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God

“According to all that the LORD has granted us… according to the abundance of his steadfast love.” Isaiah 63:7

The entire Old Testament is recorded for us to document in detail the faithfulness and goodness of God to His people. They failed and were faithless - they ignored and rejected Him. But God remained faithful to all of His promises, and everything God did for His people was ***an expression of His love.***

Even the 40 years in the wilderness.

Even the 70 years in exile in Babylon.

Even the 400 years of silence before John the Baptist appeared.

Even the 2,000 years Israel has been hardened during this, the age of the gentiles.

***All of history is an expression of God’s faithful, steadfast love to Israel.*** We have to add that extra word to our word LOVE to be sure we appreciate the depth of it. In Hebrew it is **HESED** - and it is much deeper than our casual, fluffy word “love,” which is most often connected to a feeling and generally could mean “crush.” Not Hesed. God didn’t just have mushy feelings for Israel - God made a covenant of unbreakable, everlasting love - steadfast, faithful, overflowing, abounding love. Look at verse 9:

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God

“In all their affliction he was afflicted… in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them…” Isaiah 63:9

Even in the suffering of Israel, ***God Himself was afflicted***. He was with them in the fire, as He was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He was with them in the lion’s den, as he was with Daniel. He was with them in the exile, as He was with Ezekiel. He was with them in the chaos of the Judges - as He was with Gideon and Samson. He was with them in the turbulence of the early kingdom, as He was with David, hiding in caves.

He lifted them up and carried them along. Even when they turned away from Him in rebellion and disbelief, He remained faithful.

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God

“The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.” Isaiah 63:14

***Isaiah remembered the days of Moses***, how the Lord led the people out of slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea; how the Lord was with them like a shepherd with His flock - keeping them from stumbling and being lost in the wilderness.

Can you look back on your life and see the steadfast love and faithfulness of God?

* Can you remember when He first called you to salvation?
* Can you remember first learning to hear His voice and respond in obedience?
* Can you remember the conviction of the Holy Spirit - leading you to repentance and to growing holiness?
* Can you remember the power of the Holy Spirit - leading you to reach out to people, to do ministry in the name of Jesus?
* Can you remember answered prayers - how the Lord heard you and proved His love for you over and over again?

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God

“You, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.” Isaiah 63:16

The Lord is our Shepherd. He is our King. ***And He is our Father.*** So patient and loving and present and powerful and overwhelmingly GOOD.

There are times that we FEEL abandoned - **we feel neglected** - but it’s not that the Lord has forgotten or abandoned us, He is simply testing us to depend more fully on Him. Listen to the wonderful promises of joy in RELATIONSHIP with the Lord in chapter 65.

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God

“But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create… I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people.” Isaiah 65:18-19

God promised long ago to Isaiah to make all things new - a new heaven and a new earth. He promised that the pain and suffering of this world will fade away and He will wipe every tear from our eyes. ***And so we will be glad and rejoice forever in all God creates for us - INCLUDING ONE ANOTHER***. “I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.”

For all of eternity the center of our joy will be **relationship with God** and with the people of God. We will all be caught up together into the eternal dance of Trinitrian joy in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just as the Father delights in the Son and the Son delights in the Father, so we will be joyfully transported into that overflowing relationship of joy in the Spirit - forever. No more weeping or sadness or brokenness or darkness or separation. Just love. Connection. Warmth. Acceptance. Delight.

This is why ***we often feel closest to God in special times of connecting with other believers***. You share a struggle while away on a retreat and a brother or sister prays for you and with you. You meet up one on one to catch up with a dear friend or mentor and share the highs and lows of the past year. You bond with members of your Discipleship Group as you struggle together to move forward in obedient faith to the call of God on your lives. You sit with a loved one in a time of grief and loss - just by being there - even when there are no words to say - your presence conveys to them the loving, shepherding presence of God.

I’ve shared before **one of my hardest and most memorable experiences as a pastor**. There was a tragic hunting accident and a young man, around 30 years old, shot and killed his own brother while on a hunting trip with their dad. The surviving son and dad were 1,000 miles from home so I got the call to go with a small group of long time friends and deliver the news to the totally unsuspecting wife and mother.

I met with this handful of believers who had been a long-term small group at that church together for over 20 years - and praise the Lord for that. As we walked up to the house as a group, right around dinner time - at first when the Mom answered the door her eyes lit up to see her dear friends appearing spontaneously at her house. But then she saw me and the terrible realization hit her - this is a pastor from my church. Something happened. She started shaking her head as we came in - and, not wanting to draw out the moment, I said,
“There’s been a terrible accident. It’s your son. I’m so sorry - but he died in a hunting accident.”

***This dear woman collapsed to the ground*** with the wail that only a mother can produce. Her daughter came racing down and fell into her mother’s arms. The ladies who had come with us sat down on the dining room floor with the two shocked and grieving family members. And the men got on the phone with the other men who were still far away - and got to work on details of travel, who was going where.

I’ll never forget that moment - for how absolutely horrific it was. And also how amazingly beautiful it was. There was a powerful window into real relationship there on the floor of that dining room. It was raw. It was primal. But it was love. ***It was pure grace poured out as women wept and men worked.***

I’m sure you’ve experienced a degree of this if you’ve ever been in a good small group. Hopefully not through a terrible loss like this - but more through celebrating milestones of life - graduations, weddings, new babies, new jobs. There is a powerful connection that happens when you rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. It’s a little window into the Trinitarian love of God - a little foretaste of what we will enjoy in the Lord forever.

The joy of justice. The joy of love. And finally, the joy of eternal peace:

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the comprehensive, global **Peace** of God

“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit… The wolf and the lamb shall graze together…” Isaiah 65:21,25

***All pain and injustice, all sadness and illness will be gone*** when Jesus comes back and makes all things new. Peace is not just the absence of hostility it is the presence of God - the presence of perfect harmony, wholeness, goodness, love and rest. Shalom.

This is symbolized in houses and vineyards, in generally hostile animals co-existing amicably. Israel’s history was such ***a roller coaster of NOT PEACE*** - constantly fraught with danger, war, conflict, division, idolatry, consequences…

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the comprehensive, global **Peace** of God

“Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream.” Isaiah 66:12

This is God’s specific promise to Jerusalem - to His ethnic people. Verses like this are why I believe God still has work to do among ethnic Jews. Personally, I think that’s what the **1,000 years in Revelation 20 is for** - the fulfillment of prophecies like these at the end of Isaiah that seem to be personally for Israel, for the Jews. King Jesus on the throne in Israel, reigning on David’s throne - and the holy city of Jerusalem being the headquarters of the whole world, peace flowing from the throne of King Jesus to the world, and the nations bringing their tribute to Him.

But the endgame is not just about Israel, it is about all nations:

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the comprehensive, global **Peace** of God

“And the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory.” Isaiah 66:18

All peoples will SEE the glory of Jesus and ***all nations will DECLARE his glory as well***, according to verse 19. This should give us such confidence as we share the gospel here and around the world! Our mission cannot fail! “This gospel of the kingdom WILL BE PROCLAIMED in all nations - as a testimony to them - and only THEN the end will come.”

Jesus is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We are the church unstoppable. ***The gospel of Jesus Christ is making its way to the ends of the earth*** - breaking through into the hardest to reach people groups on the planet.

I just heard a powerful story on A Third of Us - an excellent podcast about reaching the remaining unreached people groups on earth. Greg Kelly, the host, told a story about the **BRICK KILNS of Pakistan**. If someone falls into financial distress in Pakistan one member of the family or sometimes the whole family is sold to a brick manufacturing business that is almost exactly like Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom. They live in terrible conditions and have nearly impossible daily quotas of bricks to make and are essentially enslaved for years and years until they “pay off their debts” which, when most of your “wages” come back to your factory owners to pay for your room and board it’s a cycle you can never escape.

<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ep-112-setting-the-slaves-free/id1456032937?i=1000600258983>

Greg had a connection in Pakistan and basically paid a substantial bribe that let them get into one of these brick kiln operations. They paid for a day of labor so the workers could have a day off and hear their gospel presentation. As they talked about King Jesus and the mercy and grace He offers, ***nearly 100% of those present - almost entirely from Muslim backgrounds - joyfully committed their lives to Jesus.***

Greg and his friend were allowed to continue meeting with these new believers, coaching them, and ***training them in what it means to walk with the Lord***. After a month or so the owner of the factory was amazed at the increased productivity. As the people started working for the Lord, not for men, they made more bricks - and unrest and complaints went away almost entirely. The results were so impressive that the owners of other brick kilns contacted the first guy and asked what he was doing that was increasing his capacity so much. He told them about inviting in some Christians - and THEY DID!

There are a lot more details to this story - listen for yourself at a Third of Us. But the bottom line is that this one factory with a few dozen transformed lives has ***created a ripple effect*** through Pakistan bringing increased justice and improved living conditions, bringing gospel exposure and transformation along with dramatic life change in the region.

This is what the kingdom of Jesus brings - now and forever!

**Our Eternal Joy:**

1. In the perfect, eternal **Justice** of God
2. In the steadfast **Love** and faithfulness of God
3. In the comprehensive, global **Peace** of God

Justice. Love. Peace. All in full measure - all lasting forever - and 1,000 other perfections of joy as well!

What a gift that the Lord gave this to Israel 700 years before the Messiah was born. What a blessing to hold on to these promises through the exile, through the 400 years of silence.

And this is **our blessing now** - to hold onto these promises through the end of history, through the coming times of tribulation - until the time that Jesus commands the last trumpet to be sounded and He steps down in glory and says, “Enough. It is finished.”

***Our Conquering King is our coming Bridegroom.*** Once He has defeated His remaining enemies He will gather all of His children together for the great wedding celebration. And we - **the Bride of Christ** - believers throughout all time and from every tongue and tribe and nation - will be gathered together in radiance beauty to be presented as a holy offering to the Lord Jesus.

We will rejoice in Christ the King forever. And we will reign with Him forever.

For ***Jesus is the Servant of the Lord*** - and all who belong to Jesus by faith are the Servant of the Lord as well. So we serve. We labor. We do the work assigned to us. We faithfully persevere, knowing that final justice is coming. We persevere, walking with the Lord, resting in His perfect love. And we look to the day when our faith will be sight, when we will have lasting peace - when we will see Him face to face and He will make all things new!

Let’s pray!