

Isaiah 60

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 May 2017

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] In 2012, during the London Olympics, we kept hearing these words, I don't know whether you remember them.

! The eyes of the world are on you, London. I don't know if I was going to repeat it ad nauseum. The eyes of the world are on you, the world is watching.

The key show was the London Olympics, when the attention of the world was riveted, wasn't it, on the city in which we live for several weeks. One city was in the news every day, and everyone saw it. That was all the time.

There have been times when Baghdad, the eyes of the world have been on Baghdad. Mosul, Aleppo, Paris, Sydney. The eyes of the world are on a certain city. And we're either watching in delight or horror.

It takes, doesn't it, something of a massive scale for the eyes of the world to turn onto a city. But it can happen. And it happens in Isaiah 60. It's a world city in Isaiah 60, taking the center stage.

[1 : 17] Not just in the world, but the eyes of the universe are on this city. I don't know how you feel about London. We should feel proud of our city, isn't it?

Most of us are migrants. We've come here from somewhere else. But some of you were bored and bred here. Some of you have never lived anywhere else. It's a wonderful thing. And I hope we feel proud of our city.

When you're tired of London, you are tired of life. Alright? And when people say, living in London, the problem isn't London.

When you move somewhere else, I assure you, the problems will follow you there. The problem isn't the city. Some of us might feel London's awful. We don't like it.

Some of us might feel it's glorious. Some of us might feel like it's a place like nowhere else on earth. We wouldn't want to live anywhere else. But God has a city.

[2 : 17] Here in Old Testament Jerusalem. Zion. And God is more proud of Zion than we know. He has more love for Zion than you have for your home city.

Because it's where his people live. And he loves his people. And it's where he shows himself to be king of the world. And you can see what he says. He says, I want the eyes of the world to look on my city.

You, my people. You, my people. Let's start with you. Look at my city. Verse 2. For behold, which means stop what you're doing and look.

Verse 4. Lift up your eyes all around. Look about you. God says. Being a pastor is a privilege.

Being a preacher is a great delight, usually. But sometimes you reach parts of the Bible which are so sublime. And there's a description of the future that actually only poetry is adequate.

[3 : 19] And I have a simple prayer for this morning. It's Psalm 19. That the Lord's right precepts will give joy to your heart. And his radiant commands will give light to your eyes.

So here's four ways that God wants to give us that. Number one. A world in darkness, but a city a light. A world in darkness, but a city a light.

You've seen him here on great sporting occasions when it starts and the credits start to roll and everywhere is in darkness apart from the illuminated stadium.

We've all seen that if we watch sport. And there's something like that here. A world in darkness, but a city a light. What do you do when you look around this room this morning?

What do you see? What do you see when you look around this room? Some of us have sunny dispositions. Others of us less so.

[4 : 17] Some of us know what it is to go through dark nights. To know the black dog of depression. We know, don't we, about thick darkness.

But of course, the picture here in Isaiah 60 is a picture of moral blackness. Things are bad out there. And they're bad out there for Israel, for Jerusalem.

For this city, life was grim. Do you remember? The eyes of the world are on this one city, but the city's in big trouble. And we've learned that all the way through Isaiah.

Here we are in chapter 60, nearly at the end. And we can say, when people ask us, what is it? What is this book about? We can say to them, it is about how the faithless city can become the holy city. Isaiah is about how the whore can become the bride. It's a city in darkness and blackness. And so I want you to see something, Isaiah says. I want you to look at something. I want you to notice, yes, you're in a city in trouble.

[5 : 21] Yes, you live in a world in trouble. Darkness covers what? Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Zion, now the whole earth. And thick darkness is over the peoples. That means all the nations.

God's people, whether they're getting it right or when they're getting it wrong, always live in a world that is getting it wrong and that is lost and that is dark. The Apostle John says, men love darkness instead of light because their deeds are evil.

We all know this. Some of us live with this all the time, don't we? Death has arrived far too soon in our homes. There's a kind of despair that just won't lift.

Life hasn't worked out or isn't working out the way that we thought it would. Our home is not the place that we thought it would be.

In fact, it's not even our home. World affairs and local news on any given day can sometimes be more than you can bear. So what is God's solution?

[6 : 27] What does God have for us? For the earth, his earth, the peoples of the world. What is he going to do about the darkness? Do you see Isaiah's answer? Isaiah's answer is, verse 1, he's going to set his city alight.

He's going to turn the lights on. Look at this, it's very important. He's not going to turn the lights on everywhere. But in one place, in one place, he'll turn the lights on.

We want global solutions, don't we? What's the answer? To world hunger, world poverty, world injustice. Okay, fine. God has an answer to world darkness and it is in one place and in one location.

His city, arise, shine, for your light has come, Jerusalem. The glory of the Lord has risen upon you, O Zion. So should we go to Heathrow?

Should we get on a plane and travel there? It would be wonderful, wouldn't it, to go to the city? Is that what Isaiah's talking about? Everybody get on, walking where Jesus walked in Jerusalem. I've never been to Jerusalem, I'm told.

[7 : 31] But the sunrise over Mount Olives when it comes up in the east and then it falls on the city below, they say it's a stunning sight. Light floods, walls and gates, domes, towers, homes, they're all bathed in glorious light.

You've seen the pictures like I have. Tourists go, don't they, and marvel at it today. There's got to be something more than that. It has to be.

This is the Lord himself rising over Zion like the sun. So look, Isaiah says, what I'm about to show you, yes, is Zion, but it is Zion as a picture of the new creation, of what I'm going to do at the end of time.

That's what we're looking at here. This is the kingdom of God come down to earth. This is John's vision in Revelation chapter 21 and 22 of a new Jerusalem given to us in advance.

So when that day comes, when we get there, when we see the glory of the Lord covering his world in light, here's what we'll see. Three great more shafts of light.

[8 : 40] We'll see, secondly, a world at peace, a family enriched. A world at peace, a family enriched. 2nd verses 3 to 5. And nations, shall come to your light.

And kings, to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes all around and see. They all gather together. They come to you. Your sons shall come from afar and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.

Then you shall see and be radiant. Your heart shall shrill and exult because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you and the wealth of the nations shall come to you. The end of the world will mean the end of war and the beautiful growth of God's family.

The whole idea starts in verse 3. And you see it? Nations and kings will come to God's city. But they're not coming to make war. In the ancient world, kings travelled for two reasons only.

And the two reasons were, number one, to pay tribute or to make war. To pay homage or to increase their territory. And so while the kings are on the move, just get a feel of it.
[9 : 47] They've left their sons, their swords at home. The nuclear codes have been forgotten. Trident is finished. The guns have fallen silent.

Make no mistake about it. Here is huge military traffic. But it's all for peace. It's all for peace. Verse 5, the wealth and the riches of the nations are coming in. They're coming in on the battleships of the seas. But there's no planes. No aircraft carriers. Verse 6, they're bringing out animals. They're bringing gold and incense. Verse 11, look, these kings, they are not coming in pride and aggression but they are being led, verse 11, like lambs in a triumphal procession. Look how clear it is in verse 17. The middle of verse, at the end of verse 17, I will make your overseers peace. And your taskmasters righteousness. Violence should be no more heard in the land.
[10 : 50] Devastation or destruction within your borders. You shall call your walls salvation and your gates praise. Here's why this is beautiful. It is beautiful because a world of peace is matched all the way through this chapter with a family of one.

A family restored. A family reunited. Is there anything more wonderful for parents than that day when the children who've been abroad and they've been away from you and they're not within reach or sight and they come home?

And they come home. This is a family enriched. Look at verse 4. Lift up your eyes all around and see and they all gather together. They come to you. Your sons from afar and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.

This might have a literal meaning. Those sons and daughters have been carried off into exile and they're brought back home to Jerusalem. They come through the doors of the terminal and the family are there and they run to each other and embrace oblivious that the rest of the world is there because there's such joy.

Look at verse 9. For the coastline shall hope for me the ships of Tarshish first to bring your children from afar to sell them on their gold with them for the name of the Lord your God and for the Holy Man of Israel because he's made you beautiful.

[12 : 24] Tarshish is likely Spain. It's not a place that sons and daughters were ever carried off to exile. No, it's better to see this as saying at the end of time the world is reborn in glory in a new creation and every believer will stream into the heavenly Jerusalem as a son and daughter in Zion.

You see because Isaiah is talking about the end of time this is the great fulfillment of the promise to Abraham Genesis 12 and 15 and 17 through you Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed and I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth so that if anyone could count the dust then your offspring could be counted.

Do you see it here? God is keeping his great promise to Abraham and here they come in Zion verse 9 sailing in on their ship and all the islands of the earth bring Zion's sons and Zion's daughters and brothers and sisters and when we see that at the end when we see men and women from every tribe and every tongue and every people group and when we see paupers and princes and lepers and lords and kings and queens pour through Zion's gates how will we feel?

about a couple of years ago I started to use a line when I preached at a wedding and I speak to the husband about his new wife and I tell him to put children in her arms and light in his eyes people love it it's a great line I should copyright it children in her arms and light in her eyes don't you love I love the picture can you just see it with me in verse 4 that picture at the end and daughters shall be carried on the hip you see the new mums after the service you see them coming to church it's a wonderful sight it's wonderful to have children in worship absolutely wonderful and children on their mother's hip it's a picture of joy and when you see that how do you feel?

look at verse 5 then you shall see and be radiant your heart shall thrill and exult because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you the wealth of the nation shall come to you it puts light in your eyes it's that kind of joy isn't it?

[15 : 04] that's what God has promised you if you are in Christ that's what God has promised us as the people of God we this morning we meet as Zion's sons and daughters we're marching to Zion beautiful beautiful Zion come we that love the Lord and let our joys be known we're marching to Emmanuel's land we are her foreign children you're not a Jew you and one day we will enter her we will enter her always never to be shut out always safe never dangerous and we will look around at

more children of Zion than we can ever count and there will be Abraham our great great great great great great great grandfather with his millions of spiritual children all around him maybe you've never known a family reunion maybe your family is the kind of family where war breaks out and it's possible that for some of us we've not known joy like this within our four walls and Isaiah says just wait just wait because it's coming and maybe you know the joy of this or you've known it mothers and fathers and you come back home your children come back home and you love it end of term they're coming home soon and you can't wait you can't wait to have them back again and there's that throbbing swelling joy as you heard them and Isaiah is saying to us can we see the light can you feel can you feel the glory of God breaking upon us warfare is past harmony family forever but there's another sharp of light here a world in reverse and a people enthroned a world in reverse and a people enthroned the chapter is all about a great reversal in fact it's about several great reversals

Isaiah is so skillful at using reversals so in Isaiah 16 I don't know whether you noticed it as I read it everything is going in reverse it's going in the opposite direction from what we think it would so here are people flocking to the city and they are thronging to it and the nations are coming to Zion it's the main type of verb in the chapter they are bringing they are coming they are traveling they are gathering they are processing and look it's not God's people opening wide the gates to go out to the world it's the world coming to them you see that it's the world coming to their city it's like a pilgrimage in reverse I don't know whether you remember seeing the pictures of Iraqi special forces kind of bit by bit advancing on Mosul and they are trying to take it back from IS

I can't remember the numbers was it 20,000 or 200,000 a staggering number of people that were trapped in that city and as the army arrives what did they do as the army arrives what did they do they flee the city fled the city this long line snaking off into the distance over the horizon that's what we are familiar with aren't we we are familiar with people fleeing the city on the run a massive refugee crisis all over the world people fleeing but here Isaiah says at the end of time we will see the biggest refugee community the world has ever seen as thousands upon thousands upon thousands flock to the New Jerusalem but it's not the only reversal what's the real surprise here the true back to front new world order did you notice that it's that not only are the nations going against the flow and now they are travelling to Zion but they are bowing low before God's people the kings of the earth come to God's people and the kings of the earth come to God's people and they lavish them with gifts and they bow low before them look at verse 7 all the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you they shall come up with acceptance on my altar and I will beautify my beautiful house verse 10 foreigners shall build up your walls and their kings shall minister to you for in my wrath

I struck you but in my favour I have had mercy upon you verse 14 the sons of those who afflicted you shall come and bend in low to you and all who despise you shall bow at your feet and they shall call you the city of the Lord the Zion of the Holy One of Israel former top dogs now take second place who is the royal title now in this new world Queen Elizabeth is it Robert Mugabe who wins here in the end the dictator or the dictator look at verse 15 whereas you have been forsaken and hated with no one passing through I will make you majestic from ever a joy from age to age do you see the reversal God's people are now enthroned God's people are now given royal stated and the nations bow low you are a royal priesthood make no mistake here the nations are not forced into it this is what the nations want to do verse 9 they bring their wealth and honour to the Lord look how homely it is verse 8 these great mighty warrior kings coming to Zion they are like verse 8 doves doves coming over to the windows to their nest they're coming home to roost and they're coming back to where they belong under God's wing and as they get there they find this little tiny church down the road that no one hardly ever knew existed and there was Mr and Mrs Jones who prayed and gave and gave and served and served and out of that church some went to world mission and Mr and Mrs Jones prayed and lived very ordinary lives there they are with the wealth of Saudi Arabia brought in through the door and because missionaries went to Saudi Arabia with the gospel there are some of the royal rulers of the kingdom bowing low before Mr and Mrs Jones who prayed for those missionaries and gave to those missionaries and they say this is Zion this is God's city your God is our God how do we know how do we know it's true how do we know the nations will do this how do you know this well we've seen it already what did you make of verse 6 is it too early for Christmas verse 6 a multitude of camels shall come even the young camels of Midian and Ephra all those from Sheba shall come and they shall bring gold and frankincense and bring good news the praises of the Lord we three kings of Orient are one in a bus one in a car we bear gifts we travel

from afar except there were three weren't there well actually we don't know how many wise men were there

I quite like to think there were 300 there may have been 30 there may have been 3 there may have been who knows but what happened is that the kings of the earth brought gold and frankincense and myrrh for the Lord let's get this what happened there for the Lord of heaven and earth lay in a manger and the greatest on earth I would bow before the least of the earth kings before a baby I hope you believe it with all your heart and so that when you watch the news and when you lead your tiny little bible study group and when you attend a house group of 6 or you speak in a conference of 600 when you teach the bible to children or you preach to 500 when you get the news of Relief International or the Barnabas Fund or Asher's Bakery or missionaries in Japan like I did this week that mighty vast nation that slumbers all in darkness and the church is too small and the people are too weak or you get the news of pastors imprisoned in Iran and Korea

[24 : 20] I hope you believe with all your heart that one day one day the reversal is coming the world will flow backwards and the sons of our oppressors will come bowing to us I want to give us a very particular application about this this morning I'll come back to it in the last point but I want to finish with this last point what does it mean that the world will flow backwards everything will be turned upside down and fourthly a world in eternity God in our midst if the end of the world will see the world flow backwards and kings will serve servants and the homeless will eat at the royal table and the persecutor will bow before the persecuted if the world will go into a reverse if those things happen then Isaiah says it's even as if time and creation will flow backwards into God so Isaiah teaches us doesn't he that the very things that God gives us to mark time and seasons to separate night and day they'll just be turned off they'll not be these anymore because in verse 19 the Lord himself will be our light and God will be with us and on every side we will see his glory and it's as if everything will go back to how it was meant to be in the beginning only better yes it will be Eden but it will be better than Eden for in the beginning there was a garden and there was a sun and a moon in the sky but now at the end there will be a city and instead of Adam and Eve verse 22 there will be a thousand mighty nations of people on every hand on every hand and we will live forever in the perfect world with God himself in our midst and your days of sorrow will end and your days of sorrow will end what was the sorrow that this was for the people in Isaiah's day do you remember what their sorrow was well it was oppression wasn't it it was verse 14 scorn verse 15 injustice think of chapters 58 to 59 sorrow for sin think of chapter 57 it will be all over so let me give you two applications for this week some of us have seen enough and lived long enough to know that sorrow seems to be on hand on every side really

I went to see someone last week and they said to me it seems like my friends are being picked off one by one Derek Kidner is one of my favourite commentators he was a wonderful godly humble Old Testament scholar late in life he wrote about the general desolations of old age he said not only may the light of the faculties and the senses begin to fade but so too the warm glow of old friends familiar customs and long held hopes age steals each away he wrote all this will come at a stage when there is no longer the resilience of youth or the prospect of recovery to offset it in one's early years and the greater part of life troubles and illnesses are chiefly setbacks not disasters one expects the sky to clear eventually it's hard to adjust to the closing of that long chapter to know that now in the final stretch there will be no improvement the clouds will always gather again and time will no longer heal but kill but Isaiah says there will come a time when your sun will never set again and your moon will wane no more and the Lord will be your everlasting light and your days of sorrow will end and here's an application for all of us let's never forget this that one day everything will go backwards one day the nations will come to us but until then and we have to get this right we go to them until the end until the new creation we go to them until this day friends until the daylight breaks and the shadows flee away and the glory of the Lord covers the earth until we get there we board airplanes we kiss our families goodbye we take our children

God willing to the ends of the earth to serve the gospel to Afghanistan to Pakistan to Iran here's how it works because people go to them because the cabins Joe and Fred will go to North Africa because Ian and Heather Jones will go to Burkino Faso because Jose Segorio will go to Madrid because they go one day the nations will come and maybe this morning you never thought that world mission was for you but it is going or giving or praying because you wonder what will really come of it and look says God here it is if you go look who comes and so maybe Japan that I read of this week will one day become like China and maybe the cavils as they go to

North Africa and everyone that they have worked with will be dead and gone but the joy of generation after generation after generation of North Africans will be the glory of the Lord who knows did you know that the same Rome that crucified the Lord Jesus Christ in the first century AD bowed the knee to him in the fourth century AD when Constantine declared himself a Christian where will you be this time tomorrow five past twelve in office in school room with your children well we can share the gospel can't we with confidence and with joy does IPC have a future well Isaiah blows the doors off doesn't he about what we think of time scales and measuring devices because no one has a future like the people of God no one has a future for those who belong like those who belong to Zion for this city forsaken hated ignored this city will one day be the joy of the whole earth amen