

Preparing a straight highway for the Lord

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[0 : 00] Good morning and blessings to each one. Appreciated what was shared in the testimonies of the younger men, and Tim and Vern.

I too want to say welcome back, Vern. And we're excited too. A testimony of, am I willing to drink of the cup of Jesus Christ?

That phrase spoke to me. Are we willing to drink of the same cup? Jesus said, the world has hated me and it's going to hate you.

There are people that will hate you for that. But are we willing anyway? So, I want to encourage you and bless you for making the choice that you did and your decision to follow Christ and Him alone. This past week, my mind has just continuously been going to the words, Prepare ye the way of the Lord and make His path straight.

[1 : 22] The title of my message is Preparing a Straight Highway for the Lord. And we'll get to some of those verses.

If you would turn your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 40. We'll be reading that chapter and looking at it mostly today. But for some reason that, especially since Wednesday evening, when you were all sharing your testimonies and what the Lord spoke to you, that just really was on my heart. Prepare ye the way of the Lord. And I know that it was spoken by John the Baptist in preparation for Jesus' coming.

Thank you. But I believe it applies to us today in some way. And so let's look at that. And, you know, we've also heard, and this is another thing that pressed this on my heart, was we've been hearing, you know, the desire, I think was spoken by Enos and others, the desire to be used by God. You know, what am I saved for? How can God use me? And, you know, as not just individuals but also as a church body, how can God use us?

[2 : 57] How can God, Lord, use me? You know, I don't want to just sit here and do nothing, right? And that desire, again, just brought these words, preparing a way for the Lord.

Isaiah chapter 40, verse 1. Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah was a man, a prophet in the Old Testament, that prophesied the coming of Christ.

And here he prophesied on that, the voice. John the Baptist later said, I am a voice crying in the wilderness. And he said these same words.

Verse 4 says, Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

[4 : 33] And the voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever. O Zion, that bring us good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain. O Jerusalem, that bring us good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength.

Lift it up, be not afraid. Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold our God. When we read verses like 9 here, where he says, O Zion, and again, O Jerusalem, it reminds me, and I know that this was in the Old Testament, but Zion today is Christ's church.

O Jerusalem. I believe these words apply to us today. Verse 10, Behold the Lord, God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him.

[5 : 56] Behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.

Who hath measured the waters of the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills with balance?

Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor, hath taught him? These are questions. With whom took he counsel?

Who instructed him, and who taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? The answer to these questions is obvious.

No one. No one taught the Lord. He is God. These verses are exalting him as the Lord. He is, like we heard earlier, the master.

[7 : 07] He's our master. No one counseled him. He is the counselor. Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord?

The next few verses are encouraging. Verse 15. Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance.

Behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. You know, we have a nation that is where it is. But it's a drop in the bucket to God. It's no problem with him. God is much bigger than any earthly nation. Are we glad this morning that we are in his kingdom, like Tony said in his testimony about, you know, the kingdom of God and being part of that, knowing that our world is wicked.

And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beast thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before him are as nothing.

[8 : 20] And they are counted to him less than nothing. How can that be? What's less than nothing? The nations to God. I don't remember ever quite meditating on this.

But the nations, the world, the wickedness, the place we are at in our nation here is nothing. It's less than nothing to God. When it comes to being compared to God and his kingdom, it's nothing. So why are we worried? Are we trusting in him?

You know, it's all going to be brought to naught one day anyway. And he will rule. The word of God will stand forever. And then he asked the question, this prophet Isaiah, in verse 18, To whom then will we liken God?

Or what likeness will ye compare unto him? See, there's nothing here that we can compare him to. If the nations are a drop in the bucket, or they're less than nothing, how do we compare God?

[9 : 37] Who he is? What likeness are you going to compare him to? The workman melteth the graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.

He that is so impoverished, that he hath no oblation, chooseth a tree that will not rot.

He seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image that shall not be moved. Have ye not known?

Have ye not heard? Have it not been told you from the beginning? Ye have not understood from the foundation of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.

That bringeth the princes to nothing. He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity. Yea, they shall not be planted.

[10 : 57] Yea, they shall not be sown. Yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth. And he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One? Now God asks the question himself, Who will you liken, who will you compare me with?

Who shall be my equal, saith the Holy One? Verse 26, Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number.

I don't know this, I didn't look into this, but I think he's talking about the stars and all the heavenly hosts, because of the word host, host by number. He calleth them out by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power, not one faileth.

Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, my way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?

[12:16] Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding.

He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and young men shall utterly fall.

I'd like to comment on those several verses, but the God, the creator of the ends of the earth, he doesn't faint, and he's not even tired.

He's not even tired after all that he created, and after all that he is, and he's been here forever. But even you young men that are in the prime of your life, and are strong, and can run, and can hike, and climb, but you're limited, right?

There's some things you just can't do. You wear out. You burn out. You're physically, and that's what he says here. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.

[13:35] But not God. He's never tired. Isn't it wonderful that he's your master? He's never weary.

He doesn't grow weary of us coming to him. And then in verse 31, But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.

They shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint. Israel was a nation in waiting. She was waiting for the coming Messiah when this was written. God had chosen Israel to be his people. He had promised that he would be their God, and they his people.

But their experience as a nation was contrary to the promises of God. The history of the Jewish nation was a history of suffering.

[14:46] We know that. They were captive. They were slaves. They were conquered. They were plundered. The temple was destroyed by other nations, and they finally ended up in exile.

And yet they had all the promises of God that they were his people. It seemed as none of the promises were fulfilled. But this was also then the message of John the Baptist.

In Matthew 3, 1, he said basically the same words. I'll just read that real quickly. It says, In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

For this is he that was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Make his path straight. He was that voice. He was exhorting the people to be ready to prepare themselves morally and spiritually to receive the Messiah.

[16:00] When the people asked him, What shall we do? He told them, Here are some things that John the Baptist said. He who has two coats, let him share with him that has one.

Or I'm sorry, that has none. And who has food, let him do likewise. To the tax collectors, he said, Collect no more than what you should, what is appointed you.

He told the soldiers, Rob no one by violence or by false accusation and be content with your wages. But unfortunately, Israel failed to recognize the Messiah when he finally came.

Most of them did not receive him. You know, the church, the Christian church has always believed that Jesus, the same Jesus who came then in the time of Augustus Caesar will come again.

The church always looks forward to the second coming of Christ. The church always prays, Lord come. We do not simply think of a Lord who came 2,000 years ago, but a Lord that will come again at the end of time.

[17:35] We await a Lord who comes continuously into this world among his people.

You know, he came, he comes to us, he reveals himself to us individually, right? That's why we have testimonies. That's why people are changed from glory to glory glory is because Christ is still coming.

He comes to us. The Lord wants us to continue this highway. And the question was asked, you know, Lord, how can you use me?

How can I be used? How can I be useful now in his kingdom? I don't want to just be saved just to be saved and go to heaven. Yes, that's great. That's wonderful. But, Lord, how can you use me?

And then the question comes to me, Lord, how many people are saved? You've done a work in their life maybe years ago, but why aren't you using them?

[18:43] Have you ever thought that question? Why does it look like, I mean, you can't really tell. You can't really tell. Are they really Christians? I mean, they had an experience one time, but nothing ever happens.

Nothing, I mean, there's never a testimony. There's never really a life. So what is it? What does it take? Maybe it's that same voice we need to hear.

Prepare a way so the Lord can work. Maybe we need to prepare our hearts so God can work because He will work where He can. He will.

Maybe it's my heart that's not allowing Him to be master like we heard earlier. Is He really the master of my heart? And can He do with me what He wants to do?

Am I willing to prepare a way for Him to walk, for Him to work, a straight way in the desert? Am I willing to drink of that cup?

[19 : 51] I want to look at verse 3, 4, and 5 again for most of the rest of the message here. Prepare ye the way of the Lord.

Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Verse 4 says, Every valley shall be exalted.

I want to just stop there and think about that for a minute. As I was looking at this this morning, I was like, well, what?

What's a valley? What are things that are in the valley that God wants to see exalted? And I don't know exactly what the prophet and John the Baptist both had in mind or what even God all had in mind with this.

But just to do maybe an illustration of I don't know, can we write on this side?

[21 : 07] Is it clean? Okay. So I don't know what a mountain looks like really here in this or if it'll look right. But let's just say there's mountain peaks, there's hills, there's valleys and more peaks and valleys and it's just really rough.

It's really hard to walk on. And then there's another place that talks about a really rough road. Straight paths.

valleys that are deep and God does not want to walk and work in that.

He wants a straight path. So what are some things that are way down in the valley that God called John the Baptist, the prophet, it was prophesied back in Isaiah, to bring those things up where they belong.

Things that are way down. And I just wrote down some things and you can let your mind wander as well. some things that need to be exalted in our lives today.

[22 : 28] Perhaps there's things that we as people have pushed down. We've, you know, as a society we neglect things. We don't see things the way God sees them.

Things that look to us as unimportant. But God sees them and He wants us to see them as things that need to be exalted.

One would be a close walk with the Lord. A very close walk with God. A relationship with Him.

Perhaps the number one thing. And then also a humble heart.

A soft and tender heart towards others. love and care for one another's spiritual well-being. These are things that are often in the valley.

They're low things. They're things that are not highly esteemed like they should be. I'm not saying that they aren't in your hearts and in our hearts this morning.

[23 : 31] But as a whole, these are things that need to be elevated as super important. and not just pushed down in a low area of life.

A pure heart. A heart that loves the things of God more than the things of this world. James says, ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?

Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. A pure heart that loves the things of God. That's something that needs to be exalted.

If it's in a valley, it needs to be brought up as important. The importance of the body of Christ here on earth, a local body of believers.

God wants this to be exalted and brought perhaps to a higher level in our minds and in our hearts. brothers. If there was ever a time that brotherhood and fellowship was more important than now, I don't know.

[24 : 47] It seems like it's extremely important. As this world becomes darker and grows dimmer and goes darker and darker, you know, we're in a nation that is, I believe, with all my heart, without question, turned over to a reprobate mind.

I never thought that I would see the day that we are living in today. I never, as growing up, I never imagined some of the things that we're actually in today.

I just, I wouldn't have believed you if somebody told me. I never thought that people would be arguing about whether a child is a boy or a girl, or could be either.

I never imagined that in my wildest dreams. I didn't know that that would exist. You know, or that a man has a right to be a woman.

You can decide even later in life, you know, never dreamt that would be possible, never imagined it. If that's not reprobate and if that's not rebellion against an almighty God, I don't know what is.

[26 : 05] That's why I say it's reprobate. It's turned over to an evil force. Yet, they call it tolerance and love.

But it's not. It is hatred. It is a hatred toward the things of God. I'm talking about our world. I'm not talking about God's people.

I'm talking about the world that we live in today hates the things of God. They call it love but don't be deceived. It's hate. It's reprobate.

It's deception. I needed to get that off my chest. I've been feeling that for a long time that we're in a time of reprobate.

God said, I will give them over to a reprobate mind. And I believe the devil has been loose more than he ever has in our day today. And you know, someday we might go to prison for saying these things.

[27 : 12] That day might be sooner than we think. But we are not in a Christian nation. We are in a deceived, evil nation. Sure, there's still a lot of good people, well-meaning people.

people. But when these things are always on the news, they're always out there in front of us about the woke agenda and all those things that we face today.

And I'm telling you, we need each other. We're going to really need each other. to be together. So a church body is of utmost importance.

Another thing that is in the valleys these days is fatherhood. The need for godliness, godly men.

Men that love God and are about our father's business more than the business of this world.

Men that are true and godly leaders. leaders. Men that are leaders need to rise up and be what God called you to be.

[28 : 23] There's men sitting here this morning that God wants to use as leaders. You are leaders. Let God use you. Ordained church leadership is something that is being pushed into the valley.

And these are not my words. This is Bible. So it doesn't matter what I think or what you think. But according to the Bible, that is very needed.

Today, there's a lot of believers that are trying to be their own pastors. I've heard that preached and I thought, wow, that's kind of an interesting concept.

But maybe that's why church leaders are, and I'm thankful that it's not that way here, but I'm just saying overall in Christendom, it's not a big deal.

It's me and Jesus. I don't need a pastor. Another thing that's not highly esteemed is godly youth.

Young people that, I mean, after all, you're young only once, so let's have some fun.

[29 : 31] It's that idea. That's in a valley. Godly youth need to be lifted up and encouraged and strengthened.

Young people that have a desire to serve God with all their hearts. And I know it's hard sometimes. I'm sure it's hard to be young in this age that I just described.

I didn't grow up in a time that you're growing up, that you're maturing. And we want to be grace, graceful and long-suffering with you.

But don't settle for anything less than what God has for you. Don't ever accept anything less than what God, doesn't matter what time we're in. God's grace is sufficient for this day, for this time.

God's grace will be sufficient for those that are still very young and on your laps when they grow up. God's grace will be there if the Lord tarries.

[30 : 36] We are still without excuse, aren't we? But godly young people that needs to be brought up out of the valley and lifted up as a high standard, I love to see that desire in young people to just serve the Lord, to be like we heard, to make him my master.

that's wonderful and I love that but you know, God loves it even more. God loves that. That's something God loves. He rejoices in.

Another thing that needs to be lifted up is submissive wives that reverence their husbands and motherhood. Keepers at home.

Proverbs 31, women. Bible says it's so to speak in my own words, it's priceless to God. It's priceless but in our world that's looked down on, that's nothing.

It's in the valley. But let God's people make God's path straight. Children, children that obey their parents and have honor and respect for their father and mother.

[31 : 54] You know, there's many more things that our society has been pushing down and trying to eliminate and make it look worthless. And, you know, we get influenced by these thoughts.

We get influenced. The church does get influenced by it and that's why we sometimes preach these things, I guess, to remind us that if God wants something exalted, let's exalt it.

In the spirit of humility, in the spirit of Christ, we're called to prepare a highway for the Lord. When the Lord comes, he brings that revival.

But these are things that need to be in their proper place. It says also, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places, plain.

Now, I'm sure there's probably another word for plain, but probably smooth would be another word for that. Now, what are some things that need to be brought low?

[33 : 10] We talked about things that need to be elevated. We can think of a lot of things that need to be brought down a little bit, can't we? That might actually be the easier one. What are some crooked things that the Lord wants to make straight?

One of the things would be arrogance. Thinking that we are the best person, the best family, the best business, the best church, I'm just really good.

I'm really important. A proud and selfish heart that has no desire to help those in need. a heart that would rather judge everyone else and those that are less than we.

High things in our own way of thinking. Those are some mountains that need to be brought down and bring the valley up and all of a sudden we have a smooth highway for the Lord to come and work and use us.

that's the end goal is to bring glory to Him. High things in our own way of thinking. 2 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 3.

[34 : 27] A couple of verses there. 2 Corinthians 10. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Those high things, those high mountains that need to be brought down for the most part are in our minds. Every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge that tells you it's in our mind of God.

And then it tells us to bring every thought into captivity of Christ. These high things are an abomination to God.

He wants us to repent and think differently about the high hills and the low valleys in our minds and in our hearts. preparing a highway for the Lord.

In Luke 16 verse 15 it says, And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourself before men, but God knoweth our hearts, and that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

[36 : 07] Highly esteemed as things that are highly popular among men or among people. What do people in our day lift up and worship?

Are we free of that? Are we worshiping with them? You can fill in the blank. Or do we love the things of God so much that the love of other things just kind of fade away?

The love of things that God doesn't love become dim because of our love for Him. That desire as individuals to be used by God for His glory.

You know, that's a good desire. That is a healthy desire. And I want that desire. I want that to stay alive. That Lord, use me.

But make me something that you can use. If God makes us something He can use, He'll use us. He doesn't waste us.

[37 : 24] He doesn't waste anybody. But the question is, will we allow Him to? That's the key. That's our part. Those of you that desire that, bless you for that.

It is precious. There's probably nothing more precious to God than somebody that says, Lord, I want to be yours. I want you to use me.

I want to be clay and your hand. It is very good and very right to feel and to sense that burden that God wants to do something.

God wants to do something. There's something coming in the future. God wants to use us. God wants to use you and me and all of us.

Wherever He has us, He wants to work through us for His glory. But we need to look and take an honest look and consider those high things, those crooked things, rough things, those rough things in our life.

[38 : 51] He wants to just make our path straight. I don't know if you can see that, but straight with a ruler. that's what He wants.

He wants to take those rough edges and get them straight. You know, the words that we speak. We could just go on and on into life.

The rough things. You know, I have some of those. Do you? I have rough edges. I have things the Lord wants to work on. I know He does. The question is, will we allow Him to?

Maybe that's why He hasn't used us more. Think about that. Maybe it's not the Lord's fault at all. Maybe it's just, I'm a rough road.

And He's looking for a smooth highway. The heart that He can mold and use for His glory.

[39 : 59] A pure heart. without any of my own agendas. But I just want His agenda. What He wants. The end goal and the whole purpose of preparing this highway for the Lord is in verse 5.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together. together. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

That's the purpose. That's the goal. Is for the glory of the Lord. That He will build His church, His kingdom for His glory. We need to get that straight.

It's not about us. It's not about how good a person I am and how straight I am. But it's so that He gets glory. So that He can do what He wants to do.

Even in this day, in this evil reprobate world that we live in. God wants to do these things. If our heart says amen, and if you have allowed God to work in this way, then He will use us.

[41 : 32] Is He using us? Let's stand together. If God is able to use us, He's able to use you, then you are a humble person.

Did you get that? If God's using you, then you're a humble person. Otherwise, He can't use us.

When God does a deep work in our midst, and He brings true deliverances like He has, amen, it brings a humility and a gratitude.

It makes us, it causes us to worship Him. question, what will God do with the people that He can't use?

Have you ever thought about that? What will God do with people that He can't use? They don't allow Him to use Him.

God's ability to use me depends on my willingness to keep that highway prepared for Him, a straight highway for Him to travel on, to work on.

[43 : 06] But when God does these things, it does not make us proud, because God won't work in a proud heart, He won't use a proud heart, He uses a humble heart.

Lord, and then we worship Him, we praise Him, we remember who did the work, we give Him the credit, we give Him the glory, we praise Him, we worship Him.

let's pray. Father, we just thank You that we can come to You. Lord, we thank You that You have done a work in our hearts, in many hearts, Lord, and You want to continue that.

Lord, I pray that those rough edges, those hills, those valleys, that they would be made straight.

Lord, in our lives, things we've neglected would be brought up and exalted again.

Things maybe that we've, Lord, I just pray that Your Holy Spirit would just speak those things to us.

Lord, that we would, the things in our minds that are way too highly exalted would be brought down.

[44 : 18] And the things we've neglected that You love, that we would love them too. Lord, I pray You'd continue to do that work.

And Lord, we know that if we have a straight highway in our life, You will use us for Your glory. Help us, Lord. Help us repent where we need to repent.

And God, help us to ever walk close to You and to know Your heart. Lord, You promised in verse 5, there in Isaiah 40, that we will see Your glory.

All the people will see Your glory. That's what we desire, that's what we want. So Lord, we worship You, we exalt You, we lift You up. You are higher than any nation. You are, they are a drop in the bucket compared to You. They're less than nothing, Your Word tells us, compared to You. And today, we rejoice that we're part of Your kingdom. [45 : 28] Lord, may Thy will be done in our lives. May You be, truly be, our Master. We ask You, we invite You, in Jesus' name. Amen.