

Wakey wakey!

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[0 : 00] Right, well we're getting towards the end of our series in Isaiah. It's from 40 to 55. And we're in Isaiah 51 today, with a little bit from 52. Righteousness, and who seek the Lord.

Look to the rock from which you were cut, and to the quarry from which you were hewn. Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave you birth. When I called him, he was only one man, and I blessed him, and made him many.

The Lord will surely comfort Zion, and will look with compassion on all her ruins. He will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her thanksgiving, and the sound of singing.

Listen to me, my people. Hear me, my nation. Instruction will go out from me. My justice will become a light to the nations. My righteousness draws near speedily. My salvation is on the way, and my arm will bring justice to the nations.

The islands will look to me, and wait in hope for my arm. Lift up your eyes to the heavens. Look at the earth beneath. The heavens will vanish like smoke. The earth will wear out like a garment. And its inhabitants die like flies.

[1 : 30] But my salvation will last forever. My righteousness will never fail. Hear me, you who know what is right. You people who have taken my instruction to heart.

Do not fear the reproach of mere mortals, or be terrified by their insults. For the moth will eat them up like a garment. The worm will devour them like wool. But my righteousness will last forever. My salvation through all generations. Awake, awake, arm of the Lord. Clothe yourself with strength. Awake as in days gone by, as in generations of old.

Was it not you who cut Rahab to pieces, who pierced that monster through? Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep? Who made a road in the depths of the sea, so that the redeemed might cross over?

Those the Lord has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing. Everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them.

[2 : 27] And sorrow and sighing will flee away. I, even I am he who comforts you. Who are you that you fear mere mortals? Human beings who are but grass.

That you forget the Lord your maker. Who stretches out the heavens. Who lays the foundations of the earth. That you live in constant terror every day. Because of the wrath of the oppressor who is bent on destruction. For where is the wrath of the oppressor?

The cowering prisoners will soon be set free. They will not die in their dungeon. Nor will they like bread. For I am the Lord your God. Who stirs up the sea. So that its waves roar.

The Lord Almighty is his name. I have put my words in your mouth. And covered you with the shadow of my hand. I who set the heavens in place. Who laid the foundations of the earth. And who say to people.

And who say to Zion. You are my people. Awake, awake. Rise up Jerusalem. You who have drunk from the hand of the Lord. The cup of his wrath. You who have drained to its dregs.

[3 : 28] The goblet that makes people stagger. Among all the children she bore. There was none to guide her. Among all the children she brought up. There was none to take her by the hand. Those double calamities have come upon you.

Who can comfort you? Ruin and destruction. Famine and sword. Who can console you? Your children have fainted. They lie at every street corner. Like antelope caught in a net.

They are filled with the wrath of the Lord. With the rebuke of your God. Therefore hear this. You afflicted one. Made drunk but not with wine. This is what your sovereign Lord says.

Your God who defends his people. See. I have taken out of your hand. The cup that made you stagger. From that cup. The goblet of my wrath. You will never drink again. I will put it into the hands of your tormentors.

Who said to you. Fall prostrate. That we may walk on you. And you made your back like the ground. Like a street to be walked on. Awake, awake Zion. Clothe yourself with strength.

[4 : 26] Put on your garments of splendor. Jerusalem, the holy city. The uncircumcised and defiled will not enter you again. Shake off your dust. Rise up. Sit enthroned, Jerusalem. Free yourself from the chains on your neck.

Daughter Zion, now a captive. For this is what the Lord says. You were sold for nothing. And without money you will be redeemed. Let's pray.

Almighty God, we thank you for your word. We thank you that you speak to us through it. And as we think through this passage together, we pray that you bless us. Help us to understand what you want to say to us.

And teach us so that we might be equipped as your people to live for you every day. We ask for this in Jesus' name. Amen. One of the things that perhaps I might say I dislike or I might say I can't stand is the sound of my alarm on my phone in the morning.

And it doesn't matter what sound it is, it still just gets annoying. And I don't know about you, I'm forever changing it. I thought that's too annoying now.

[5 : 41] I'm just going to, I need to change the sound that I'm waking up to. I think, and then, oh, that's a much better noise to wake up to. But the problem is it only lasts a couple of days.

And then like, that's now really annoying. So I need to change it again. Can't stand the new alarm. It's actually not got nothing to do with the noise, has it?

It's got nothing to do with the alarm. It's that I'm asleep and I don't want to wake up. However, we might not need the alarm.

We're not like the alarm, but we need them, don't we? Without the alarm, we'd stay in bed. Perhaps the kid would be late to school. We might even be late to work. We need an alarm.

The living God here is like a spiritual alarm clock. And he's waking people up from being spiritually asleep.

[6 : 38] He's waking them up to the reality of who he is. And he wants to wake up to the reality of who we are. He wants to wake people up to the new life that they can experience in him.

I wonder, and I hope it does actually wake us up this morning. I hope it wakes us up spiritually. We need it because it's so tempting to drift off back to sleep.

This passage, what we see is about the living God waking up Israel. And as I say, my hope is it should wake us up too. We're going to see kind of four points really.

And they're all to do with being awake. The first one that we're going to see is the awakening of our ancestors. The awakening of our spiritual ancestors.

In our passage, that's what we're going to see. And what we know is that when God speaks, things wake up. Things happen. We know that he awakens a new creation.

[7 : 45] It's God speaking and things bursting into life. There was nothing there and he awakes this new creation. But we also see God, he awakes a people for himself with Abraham.

And what he wants, with Israel here, what the living God wants is he wants his people in exile. Remember, we've reminded you there's lots about this.

This is spoken to a people who've been kicked out of their homeland and are living in a foreign nation. And it's towards the end of the exile when this is kind of for them.

70 years, a lifetime. And they're kind of forgetful. And they need reminding. The living God wants them to fixate their gaze on what he's done in their history, in their family history.

These are supposed to be like alarm bells that ring and point to God's character. And so you see what he says to them in verse 1.

[8 : 50] And look, he's talking to people. Part of this remnant who are in exile, he's talking to them. He knows that some of them are faithful. Look at me. He says, listen to me.

You who pursue righteousness and who seek the Lord. There are some of you who are, you know, you're doing great. You're seeking me. But he says this. Look. He says, look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn.

Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth. He's saying, look and be wakened to be reminded of what happened when I woke a new nation for myself.

How God's people began. One man, he tells them. Look at their origin. I noticed, I kind of think there's a play going on here, how he uses construction language, quarries and rocks. He says, you think your Jerusalem is just a pile of rubble in Babylon, but no, look at the rock from where you were cut. Sarah's womb, Abraham and Sarah, it wasn't just that she was old, it had ceased to give life.

[10:12] The origin story of the people of God is a miracle from death to life. If God breathed life into a dead womb when all hope was gone to a 90-year-old woman, you see what he's saying?

He can breathe life into a dead nation in exile. It also means that for us, if we feel like we're in a dead-end situation in life, he can breathe life into that.

Look back at the origin story of the people of God. So he starts with saying, look back at Abraham. After that, he tells them, kind of you get this language of creation.

Look with me, verse 3 of what he's going to do. And he points back to point forward. The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins. He will make her deserts like Eden.

Her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. The reminder, if the Lord made Eden from nothing, he can take Israel's wasteland.

[11:27] He can take Israel's deserts and make them team with life. If this is true, Israel, if this is who I am, then why are you fearing?

Mortals, people, that he says that seem like giants. Insults that terrify.

It's all going to wear out. The same image that has come across, perhaps in a few weeks earlier, they're going to wear out like a moth-eaten garment. The garment that's been hung in a wardrobe and you open the wardrobe and it's covered with holes.

And it's useless. The people, the enemies of God are going to wear out like that. So why are you fearing them? Because what I do, creation, my people, lasts forever.

My salvation will last forever, he says in verse 6. My righteousness will never fail. And so this is the crucial point. He says, God's people, you know, look back at the history of where you've come from.

[12:32] I'm the same God. I'm the same God to you now as I was then. Don't just look back in history.

It's not just a history lesson. No, look back because belief in what God has done should move them to pray and belief in their present mess.

And if that is who God is, his character, then what we see is that they cannot stay silent. And they don't. Their response is actually what you would expect.

As they look back at God, this is kind of saying what he expects them to say back to him. Their belief in his past power should drive them to demand that he show his hand again.

Again. Look with me in verse 9. This is kind of like a prayer of boldness. It's God's people, the expectancy that this is how they should pray back if they believe this.

[13:36] This is how they should pray back to the living God. Awake, awake, arm of the Lord. Clothe yourself with strength. Awake as in days gone by, as in generations of old.

You see what their cry is saying? You're the Red Sea God. You're the God who cut Rahab to pieces. In the Bible, Rahab isn't, you know, just a person.

It's a name for a chaos monster, a dragon representing the crushing power of Egypt. They're calling out to the monster slayer. If you slew the dragon, you can do it now.

This is expected to be the boldness of people who've remembered who they are. That same boldness is really what we're to be like when it comes to the church.

When us as individuals or as a people are in the middle of mess, we don't read the Bible either as just a history lesson. But it's ongoing fact of an example and a reminder of who God is for us today.

[14:48] That we look at Israel, that we look at creation, but now we have the advantage of looking at Jesus and looking not only at that, but how he personally, in history, you know, the work of the cross, but also in our own lives, you can testify to how God has been faithful in days gone by.

How God has been faithful. And to look back at that. There's this phrase that a group of Christians, hundreds of years ago, they're called the Puritans, and they used to use this phrase, but at first sounds kind of, you know, it's a strange phrase to use.

They said in prayer that you should sue God for his promises. And you see what that means? It says that you take the promises of God, take the ways acted in history, what he's promised to do for his people, and you bring that into present day expectancy.

And because the living God never fails on his word, on his promises, you can say, this is who you are, God. This is who you've said to be. You're not the promising promise. You are the promise keeping God and you've said this is what you'll do.

And so do it again. Because you've said it. I didn't say it. You said it. You can take the promises of God and pray them back to him. Give us the strength through grief that you've promised.

[16:10] Give us the hope over anxiety. Be the God of the Red Sea for us today. Because that's who you are. We want God to be this for us.

We want him to come and slay our monsters. However, God's response is, as you might expect, not what we'd expect.

He doesn't go after the monster out there, but he insists in waking up his people to what's going on in their hearts.

And what we see is that there are, amongst God's people, you know, lots of different things going on in their hearts and he picks on two groups of people that are included in the crowd of people.

He picks on the faithful who are forgetful and he picks on the unfaithful who rebel and they both need waking up. Kind of, we looked at, kind of moves us on to our second point, which is that the awakening to sinful reality, the awakening to sinful reality.

[17:26] The first group that we're going to look at is the forgetful faithful. Essentially, what they've said, what they're going to say to God in verse nine is, wake up God, where are you?

And look with me in verse 12, what God's response to them is. He says, I, even I, am he who comforts you.

He's saying to them, I was never asleep. I've been awake this whole time. No, no, no. You're the ones who were asleep in fear.

Look, that's what he says in verse 12. Who are you that you fear mere mortals, human beings, who are but grass, that you forget the Lord your maker. Verse 13, who live in terror every day because of the wrath of the oppressor.

You've forgotten your maker. Sarah. the same rock, the same rock, that breathed life into Sarah's womb is the one they're forgetting.

[18:35] The faithful, they go to God, but, and you know, that's great that they go, go to God, that it's exactly the right place, but he has become smaller in their minds than the people in front of them.

They're oppressors. I mean, it's, they are big oppressors. You know, they're loud, aggressive, and in their face, and it makes them feel distant and removed. Maybe you can relate to that.

When, when people, or situations, or things in life, that day to day, feel big, and God's voice feels like just a tiny whisper.

They're forgetful, faithful, they're kind of, you, you ever had this where you get a, you've got a bucket, or a, carry a bag, and you don't realise it, but it's got a hole in the bottom.

Terrible if you, if you have a bucket with a hole in the bottom that you can't see. And, and they feel, it's like, the, the knowledge of God, the understanding of God, it's been filled up, their knowledge bucket, it's filled up to the brim, but slowly, that knowledge, without paying attention, just drip, drip, drip, without, keeps leaking out.

[19:53] And people, or life, and difficulty, just makes the hole, bucket, the hole in the bucket bigger. Maybe that's how we might, feel this morning.

That life and people, that feel like giants. The hole is big, but God's voice, is faint. That's the first group, he speaks to.

The second group, is within the people of God, who are in exile, he speaks to, the unfaithful rebels. A much more dangerous place, to be, to be part of.

A much more dangerous group, to be part of. Because this group, are not asleep, because of forgetfulness, but they're, but it, it's their sin, and rebelliousness, that is how they're asleep.

Because, what's happened, is they don't realise, how serious sin is, and, and that they're asleep, to what they're really like. And, what we see, is that the message, from God is, God doesn't pull any punches, with them.

[20:56] He doesn't. It's, it's serious stuff. Verse 17. Awake, awake. Rise up Jerusalem. And, here we have it.

You have drunk, from the hand of the Lord, the cup of his wrath. You have drained it, to its dregs, the goblet that makes, people stagger. throughout the Bible, God's anger at sin, is portrayed, with

picture language, like a cup of poison.

And, that the guilty party, must drink, and experience, his judgment. God's judgment, is the spiritual, consequences, of sinful choices.

That's what God's judgment is. This is not, God just being, angry, or flippant, or like, you know, losing it, but it is, his settled reaction, to what happens, when his perfect holiness, and sinful rebellion, meet together.

And you see what it, you see what it says, about this cup? It must be drunk, right down to the dregs. The dregs, are normally that part, of the drink you, leave, aren't they?

[22 : 18] It's too strong, and it distorts the taste, and leaves that, bitter finish. But God's people, must drink every strop, even where the, concentration, of his judgment, is the most intense.

Like someone, on a Friday night, who's had one too many beers, staggering home, their body, not able to handle, the alcohol. God's people, will stagger, not able to handle, the weight, of his judgment.

It is deeply unsettling. And there is a truth here, about the seriousness, of sin. The seriousness, of what it means, to rebel, against, the living God.

You know, we do this, don't we? We often, treat, our own sins, like minor slip ups. Like a mistake, on a test. God calls it, a cup of staggering.

He said it's poison. This is his holy, unsettled opposition, to those who are against him. It's the weight, of his justice.

[23 : 31] And because he's a good judge, he cannot just look, the other way. You know, the wrath of God, the anger of God, is simply God, giving us, what we'd asked for, in the first place.

It's life without him. And it turns out, that life without him, is a cup of dregs, that no human body, can handle. It's sobering, it's shocking, it's deeply unsettling.

But, what really, hits me in this, is that both groups, the forgetful faithful, and the unfaithful rebels, they're bunched together. It's deeply unsettling.

Look at verse 19, he speaks to both groups, verse 19, he says, these double calamities, have come upon you. Who can forget you, ruin and destruction, famine and sword, who can console you?

He says to them, your children have fainted, they lie at every street corner. They lie at every street corner, like an antelope, in a net. He says, God's people, and not only them, but, you see the impact, that sin has, it has an impact, on their children.

[24 : 46] That is deeply unsettling, that maybe our sin, can have an impact, on our children. He says, and that, you and your children, are like a wild animal, an antelope, that can't escape.

Caught in a hunter's net, you can picture it, the hooves kicking, the muscles straining, the panic rising, as it only gets more exhausted. And the more, the antelope kicks, the tighter the knots get, God's people cannot escape.

They were carried off to Babylon, and not one of them, was able to self-rescue, their way home. And it's been that, at this point, ever way since. This is the wake up, we need, isn't it?

It's a reminder to us all, that, as I keep saying, this isn't just a history lesson, about exiles. This is the trajectory, of every soul without God.

This is what it looks like, to live, in a relationship, without him. Trapped, exhausted, and kicking against a net, you didn't make, and can't break. We've seen how God, awakened our ancestors, and awakened creation.

[26 : 03] We've seen how he's, awakening us, to our sinful reality. But this is where, we need to hear, the good news of the gospel. This is where we need, to be awoken, to a different voice, to be awoken, to what Jesus has done.

We need to be awakened, by the exchange, of what, of Jesus. And it comes, in verse 22, is pointing, over to what will happen, when Jesus will come, at Calvary.

See what it, look what he says, verse 22. Or 21, he says, hear this you afflicted one, made drunk, but not with wine, drunk with judgment. This is what the sovereign Lord says, your God who defends, his people, see, I have taken, out of your hand, the cup that made you stagger.

From that cup, the goblet of my wrath, you will never drink again. The dregs, the cup of wrath, like a cup of poison, that we were destined to drink.

What we see is that, and we see this in Jesus' life, Jesus says it, he takes it to his very own lips, and he drinks every last drop, down to the dregs. You know, even the night before he dies, he says so himself.

[27 : 21] Luke 22, he says, Father, if you were willing, take this cup from me. Take the cup of wrath away. The cup, not of his, he was sinless, but take the cup of everybody's sins, the anger, the wrath of God, that they all deserve, that I'm going to drink, take it from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.

That night, while the disciples were asleep, exhausted from sorrow, Jesus stayed awake in anguish, he took that cup, the cup that Isaiah speaks of here, the cup that makes people stagger, and he drank it to the dregs.

He enters the staggering of the human condition, and it would make him stagger. Stagger as he walked with a cross on his back, stagger emotionally with the thought of the separation that sin would bring between him and his father.

The cup would make Jesus stagger all right. that we would deserve to drink, that we will never, ever have to. Awakened by, this is the message that should awake us.

Waken us up. But there's one more left to go. And we've seen, we've heard repeatedly, awake, awake. Move to our kind of last point, which is awakened to new strength.

[28 : 52] Awakened to new strength. Three cries in the passage of awake, the voice of the people crying awake to God, the voice of God crying awake to judgment. But there is this third voice, this third voice that says in verse 50, chapter 52, verse 1, awake, awake Zion, clothe yourself with strength.

Put on your garments of splendor, Jerusalem, the holy city. And I just wondered if you caught this, there's a kind of repetition, how the living God speaks to his people.

Notice with me, he uses exactly the same words as when they told him to wake up. Look with me, see verse 9, see what he says, see what they say to him, they say, awake, awake, arm of the Lord, clothe yourself with strength.

He says, awake, awake Zion, clothe yourself with strength. There's a point to that repetition that arm of the Lord is clothed with strength.

And where do we see that? We see it because his people, the faithful, forgetful, the unfaith, the rebel, because they've been forgiven, because they've had the judgment taken away, they are clothed with a strength that is not their own.

[30 : 12] Their garments won't be moth-eaten, but garments of splendor. It's pointing, what we see, it's pointing to royalty. You see that? He says, putting on your garments of splendor.

And then he says, verse 2, shake off your dust, rise up, sit enthroned. These garments of splendor are not just, you know, it's not just in some nice new clothes.

These are the, these are royal robes. The transformation is from lying down in the dirt to sitting on a throne.

From rags to eternal riches, you are an heir, the church, we are heirs to the throne of God. Now there's been a lot over the last few years about what it means to be an heir to the throne.

Prince Harry's famous book, who says that he was the spare, not the heir, because his older brother would become, is destined to become one.

[31 : 19] What do we, what do we, what does, how does Prince Harry feel like that? Well it suggests that he feels kind of second rate. That he wouldn't inherit the title or anything that went with it. Prince Harry would feel differently about this, receiving this one.

We should feel differently because there is no spare. The inheritance that we receive is the same as Jesus.

It's exactly the same. The royal robes, to sit enthroned, we're given what is given to the king. We're co-heirs.

Listen to this, Paul writes this in Romans 8, he says, now if we are children, God's children, he says, then we are heirs, heirs of God and co-heirs, co-heirs with Christ.

If you need, we share in his sufferings in order that we may share in his glory. And these verses from Isaiah are pointing to that because what we're now to live is in light of receiving this inheritance.

[32 : 29] We're to live in light of that. This is the reality of what it means to have new life in him is that we get everything given to the king is given to us in him. The issue that we come back to, maybe it's going all the way through is perhaps day to day we don't feel very royal.

I don't know, I don't feel very royal that often. And maybe you just don't feel like you've received an inheritance at all. And in one sense you'd be right, the full inheritance will come when we meet

Jesus face to face.

But God has not left us alone. He's not left us alone to try and feel royal on our own. I don't know how you do that, to feel royal. When God says clothe yourself with strength, he's given the very strength he's talking about.

We've been given kind of a down payment you might say of that inheritance. It's the spirit of God living in you. God's spirit living in you is the down payment of your future inheritance.

God's spirit is the one who may be that voice's fame but it whispers to you you are a child of God. He is the strength that allows you to stand up when life has trampled you.

[33 : 47] You receive in part now what you'll receive later in full the very life and power of Jesus reigning in you. And so it's Monday morning the alarm goes off on your phone you think oh no but perhaps even tomorrow is that you might remember this and remember that it's a pointer isn't it to get up to get to work and do whatever you need to do but the living God also wants to jolt you and awake you to who you are in him so that you can face the day and remember that whatever is going on the situations that we come across it means I don't know when you when you walk into that meeting and there's that project that you face criticisms from colleagues remember the robe that Christ has placed on your back you don't have to win their approval to be royal you're already in air shake the dust of that opinion away when your bucket starts to drain and you look in the mirror and all you see is kind of you think you've failed or you see regrets or mistakes remember the rock remember the dead womb

God breathed life into look at the cross where the cup was drained to the dreg so that you wouldn't stagger remember the history of God's faithfulness in your own life shake off the dust the net is cup you are an air it's time to wake up let me pray almighty God we just praise you for all that you've done in saving us Lord we recognise our guilt before you and Lord we deserve to drink that cup and we're sorry for the many sins the times where we've either been forgetful or we've just been completely rebellious Lord I thank you that you drank it thank you that you drank every drop and we won't face any judgment because your son is judged in our place we praise you for that and I pray that you'd help us in the way that we live to look back at what you've done in history to look back at what you've done at the cross and to look back at the faithfulness you've done in our own lives and that indeed when we do wake up tomorrow morning that you'd each day wake us up to remind us that our bucket would be full to the brim reminding us who we are in you and where we're headed in life with an eternal future and so bless us and help us we pray in Jesus name Amen