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Key Verse: The Lesson: Isaiah 58:1-12 Written with ongoing reflection

Shout out; do not hold back!

Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion,
to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me
and delight to know my ways,
as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness
and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments;
they want God on their side.

“Why do we fast, but you do not see?

Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day
and oppress all your workers.

You fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today
will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose,
a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush
and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast,
a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;

when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.
Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

The Reflection:

1 "Shout out; do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!" If you watch enough news these days, everyone who disagrees with anything is being extremely trumpety. But what is all the noise really about? Is it to glorify God? Is it to please God? Social media has given us a platform to speak boldly, but I wonder if these same people would say the same exclamations to others in person? For this verse, let's use it to proclaim HIS glory and remember who we are as Christians. This is important to remember for the next verse.

2 "Yet, day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways...and they want God on their side. 4 You fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist." Oh dear, actions do speak louder than words, especially pious ones. Let's seek God with our whole hearts, and our clear minds. Truly seek and you shall find the ONE who has never left us! He guides us to righteousness outside of worldly events.

6 "Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to let the oppressed go free..." Oppression is real, Jesus wore the chains in order for us to be free. Everyone is free in Christ. How will we choose our justice? How does Jesus advise us to be free? Help others to seek, help others to know true freedom through His grace. Be a sincere witness for Him.

8 "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you..." Walking the talk people! Easy to say, very hard to apply, especially when living too much in the world. Jesus loves us so much! He gives us all the opportunities to share of ourselves with grace. He knows of our intentions and of our limitations. It's refreshing to know He is our one true vindicator!

9 “Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, “Here I am.” “If you remove the yoke among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil...then your light shall rise in the darkness.” It’s so easy. Point, blab, look. All humans have done it and continue to do it. All God wants us to do is look in the mirror first. Then an ah ha moment can happen. And, of course, there He is! Help us to see and look within before the evil yakety yak begins. Being free of the yoke is amazing!

11 “The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places...you shall be like a watered garden whose waters never fail.” I’m sure all of us have been in that parched place; where you think you have no more to give, not a morsel more, not a minute more. But, as Christians, we will hopefully resort to our one and only hope. Time and prayer, prayer and time, which gives us Him. He listens. He wants that drenched garden for us!

12 “Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be...the repairer and restorer of streets to live in.” It’s all up to us. What will you choose to do? Follow the Lord or follow false hope and idols? Our hearts are smart and our heads usually follow suit. Pray for our future so we can be the rebuilders of faith, the repairers of lawlessness, and the restorers of our cities. Our generations to come are watching. Give them that love, that strength, that courage. Give them God, always!

The Prayer:

Dear Lord,

Guide us continually. We need to listen, act, and listen more! Help us to obey your ways; ways that always work for us and not against us. You know our hearts, you know our temptations. During these days of Lent, inspire us with your constant HOPE.

In Jesus’ name, Amen

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