

## SCRIPTURE | Isaiah 58:1–14 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> “Shout it aloud, do not hold back.

Raise your voice like a trumpet.

Declare to my people their rebellion  
and to the house of Jacob their sins.

<sup>2</sup> For day after day they seek me out;  
they seem eager to know my ways,  
as if they were a nation that does what is right  
and has not forsaken the commands of its God.

They ask me for just decisions  
and seem eager for God to come near them.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Why have we fasted,’ they say,  
‘and you have not seen it?’  
Why have we humbled ourselves,  
and you have not noticed?’

“Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please  
and exploit all your workers.

<sup>4</sup> Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife,  
and in striking each other with wicked fists.

You cannot fast as you do today  
and expect your voice to be heard on high.

<sup>5</sup> Is this the kind of fast I have chosen,  
only a day for a man to humble himself?  
Is it only for bowing one’s head like a reed  
and for lying on sackcloth and ashes?

Is that what you call a fast,  
a day acceptable to the LORD?

<sup>6</sup> “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?

<sup>7</sup> Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter —  
when you see the naked, to clothe him,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

<sup>8</sup> Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness will go before you,  
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

<sup>9</sup> Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: ‘Here am I.’

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,  
<sup>10</sup> and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the noonday.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you always;  
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.

You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.

<sup>12</sup> Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

<sup>13</sup> “If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath  
and from doing as you please on my holy day,  
if you call the Sabbath a delight  
and the LORD’s holy day honorable,  
and if you honor it by not going your own way  
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,  
<sup>14</sup> then you will find your joy in the LORD,  
and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land  
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.”  
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.

## FOR REFLECTION

When you hear the word justice, what thoughts immediately come to mind? If ideas like uprightness, equity, vindication of the right or administration of law are your first thoughts, you are on to something. But what grounds these abstractions? What concretizes them?

We tend to think of doing justice in two distinct, compartmentalized ways. From a more classically liberal perspective, doing justice is something that needs to happen because the deepest structures of society are affected by inequities. If you take a more conservative position, doing justice is something that needs to happen because you are moved by pity. For Isaiah (and God), neither will do. Justice and doing justice are motivated by God's reviving, renewing and restoring Spirit in the community of believers, the church.

The final chapters of Isaiah are the climax of his prophecy. Yet even in this chapter we find that the words of the prophet end in a climax — in promise. Chapter 58 begins with words of indictment and rebuke, but it softens to words of promise and celebration. What brings about the change of tone? What moves Isaiah's words from scorn to esteem? The answer in a word: Revival.

1. How do you react to the first five verses? Why?
2. What motivations guide your desire for justice? Does this passage expand your understanding of God's idea of justice?
3. According to the sermon and this passage, are there ways in which you misunderstand justice?
4. The turning point of the passage is in verses 10 – 13. How do you understand the relationship between justice and renewal, revival, and restoration? What stood out to you about Isaiah's understanding?
5. If you were to ask God to intervene in your life, would you ask for justice or something else? Why?
6. Based on this passage, in what ways should the church of Christ be uniquely equipped to do justice? What would get in the way?