

Immanuel

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 0 0] All right. Thank you so much, Elliot. Appreciate that. Good morning, everybody. How you doing? Doing well. It's been tough out there. Hey, shout out to the Umbrella Crew. I just noticed you guys out there just loving on people, getting them out of the heavens did open today. It was just mostly outside, apparently. But yeah, those guys, Kevin and the crew, you guys, yeah, thankful that you kept us dry or many of us dry on the way in. So appreciate you, buddy, and everyone else that helped out there. Before I jumped into the sermon, I also want to remind us, and I made this announcement last Sunday, is that next Sunday, the 17th, we are going, as all of the sites of One Harbor Church are doing this together, we are going to have this moment to give to Church Planning Development East.

This is an organization that has been spreading the gospel in the Middle East, the Muslim world, and they've been doing it very effectively. Just this year, they've estimated about 3,000 house churches have been planted within their organization, and they also estimate their total amount of house churches throughout the Middle East is somewhere between the 18,000 to 20,000 range, which is just really mind-blowing. And so we want to, we've been so privileged to get to know them and get behind them over the last few years. And so God has opened up an opportunity for them to create kind of a base of which to work out from. And so they are wanting to buy a piece of land and build on that land for several reasons. And it just affords a place for leaders to come in, get trained, equipped. Also, it affords them an opportunity to really offer a way to bless the community around them. They'll have a working dairy farm as part of that as well. So yes, the gospel comes in many different forms, right?

Including cows. So anyways, the first phase of their project is to raise \$50,000 to secure the land. And so we're going to get behind that, us, all the sites at One Harbor Church, there's going to be other churches involved. And so just come ready, pray into what God's calling you to give, to be a part of the work that is going forth in that area. And so we'll be doing that next week. All right, cool.

Just real quick, this is for the sake of the sermon online. So our guys have to know where to edit it. So pause. Good morning again. And my name is Jesse, one of the pastors here. Those who are listening online, those of you who are new, glad you're with us. If you got your Bibles, go ahead and turn to Isaiah 7. That's where we'll be starting from. And we, like, like Elliot had alluded, we are launching our Advent series today, which will bring us through the end of December. And Advent just simply means, it's a fancy word for meaning arrival. And for the Christian faith specifically, it is a time to focus and dwell and meditate upon the arrival of Jesus Christ. And to step into what, what the people in that first Advent, we're feeling and anticipating and desiring when Jesus shows up on the scene, because that informs how we're meant to live today. We are just like Israel of old and God's people of old. They were awaiting this Messiah to come and to rescue them. And they were anticipating this for years upon years upon years. And that turned into centuries. And then ultimately it happened. And now we are the church of God. We are the people of God. And we are living in between the time of the first coming of Christ and his second coming. We are a people eagerly waiting and anticipating this next

Advent of Jesus. And so we have titled this series Emmanuel. Emmanuel is a word that means God is with us. And it reminds us that, hey, we look back and we see how he was with us in the flesh, in the, our incarnation of Jesus Christ. And he's with us as we wait for his return now in the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit that is sent to his church to be God with us until the end of the age when he returns. And so we're going to look at this word Emmanuel that happens throughout the Bible.

[4 : 15] And so that's why we are starting in Isaiah one. That's the first place in the Bible that Emmanuel is used. And so we get to learn the origins of this word today and, and what they were used for. We, we typically, when we think of Emmanuel, we get like, we get like nice Christmas vibes, right? But, um, you think about the, the book of Isaiah and kind of stepping into, to, uh, Old Testament prophets, they typically aren't giving off the Christmassy vibes. All right. Um, they, they evoke more like hill fire and brimstone than like gingerbread and, uh, and tinsel. Um, and it's just, that's who it is.

It's like, it's like typically an Old Testament prophet. If they were coming down the road to a, to a king with a message from God, the king was usually like, this could be really good, or this could be really bad. You just never knew, uh, what you were getting. Um, but needless to say, this is the first place we do see Emmanuel. And actually it is in the context of a familiar verse where probably if you've been around, uh, Christianity long enough. And here's the verse, it says, behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall be called Emmanuel. Very familiar verse. Most of us, when we hear that, we go to nativity scenes like starry night, lean to shack, um, Jesus in a lit manger and swaddling clothes, like all the animals around, hay and all that stuff. Right. Um, it's kind of like the Bob Ross happy thoughts. Like that's what we think of Emmanuel, but that verse actually in this context, it isn't about good times. It isn't spoken at a time of prosperity and peace. Aren't you excited now? So we're going to read, let's read Isaiah seven verse one.

It says this in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, son of Isaiah, king of Judah, resin, the king of Syria, Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. And when the house of David was told Syria is in league with Ephraim. And just so you know, Ephraim is just a name in the Bible that was used for Israel. So when you hear Ephraim, think Israel, Syria is in league with Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind. So we open up this thing with like every good story.

You got time, you got place, you got people, and you got the problem. And this seems pretty straightforward so far, but there's a lot going on behind this, um, that I think it would just be helpful to get into, uh, to understand the context a little bit more. And, um, if you're newer to the Bible or maybe you've been following a long time, you might be wondering in this moment, like, why is Judah fighting with, with Israel? Um, and actually that goes back 200 years before the verses we just read before the time of Isaiah. So you have like the kingdom of Israel, you have the first King Saul, and then, uh, then you have King David and King David, uh, he made, you know, he did something that God said, okay, I'm going to split the kingdom because of this.

And so his son Solomon, he's the next in line, his reign goes great, but then Solomon's son. And after Solomon, we see the kingdom of Israel, it gets divided. There is this huge falling out.

[7 : 45] So there's 10 tribes of the 12 tribes of Israel. They decide to secede and create what is called the Northern kingdom of Israel. Um, and so that was again, referred to as Israel, Ephraim, Jacob. And then you have these two tribes of the 12 tribes of Israel that stay together and that's Judah and Benjamin, and they formed the Southern kingdom. And in scripture, it's always referred to as the kingdom of Judah. And that's the Southern kingdom. And Judah was King David's tribe. It was Jerusalem, uh, was, was in Judah. So when the Northern kingdom was established, they formed their own capital city.

They had their own throne with their own Kings that ruled over them. And they even created their own place to worship so that their people wouldn't come down to Jerusalem and maybe stay instead of, you know, keep in the Northern kingdom. So all that to say is it was a pretty bad breakup.

And like most, it turned out into an ongoing feud that never really settled. And throughout the 200 years leading up to the time of King Ahaz that we're reading about today, Israel and Judah would fight.

Sometimes there would be deaths. They would kill each other. They'd take captives and cities from one another. Now all that's happening. This family feuding is going on in the background of this context, but there were also surrounding nations that were threats as well. And so kind of give you an idea of what's happening. I came with some visual visual aid so you can check out this map here.

And, um, we are pulling out all the stops as you can see today to try to, if you're, if you're me, you need pictures. I was like that kid with like the picture Bible and like growing up the pictures pages got a lot of attention, like not so much the word pages. So hopefully this is helping us all out, including myself. So at the time of Isaiah seven, um, you have, uh, you know, you can see where Syria is in relation to the King Northern kingdom of Israel there. And then below that you have Judah.

[9 : 45] And then you have this other nation called Assyria and Assyria. If you see it over to the right, Assyria had become this superpower in this region. They were conquering nations left and right, uh, in order to expand their empire. And, and a few years prior, Assyria had actually come, uh, to wage war against Israel and to conquer Israel. But Israel got out at that one and they escaped from it by paying them off. Um, so they, uh, unfortunately what happens though, when you give, uh, a bad guy, tons of money, um, and they already have, they're already stronger than you are. They don't just kind of go away. Like, uh, you both weaken yourself and you strengthen them by giving them a ton of money. And, um, and then also like when, when you do that, like people that are more powerful you than you, and they look and they say like, Oh, that was pretty easy. Now you just made yourself a target. You're easy money. And so Israel was in this like, not so great place, uh, with this looming threat of Assyria on their borders. And so, um, even though they had bought some time, it didn't solve their problem. So Israel does what, what most people do in this situation.

Hey, we can't fight these guys by ourselves. Let's make some alliances with some other kingdoms around. And so that's why they go. And there's an alliance between Syria, uh, and Israel. Uh, they, they were also, uh, both of them were living under the same Assyrian threat. And so Israel's become buddy, buddy with Syria. Um, but they're also thinking like, Hey, you know, two of us are great.

You know, a third would be even better. And so, you know, they had reached out to Judah already and say, Hey, why don't you get in on some of this? You know, we can help each other out. But Judah was like, thank you. No, thank you. And, uh, that didn't sit well. You know, you already got the bad feelings between the, the, the, the two nations. And so that just re stirred things back up again.

And so what happened is, uh, in, in a, what happened leading up to this moment is that Israel and Syria, uh, during King Ahaz's reign had already, uh, fought, um, and killed 120,000 men of valor.

Um, they had invaded Judah. They killed 120,000 of your, of their best soldiers, right? Which I don't know how big Israel's army or Judah's army was at the time, but when you're losing 120,000 people that are like your best fighters, that's kind of a bummer, right? And they also took Syria and Israel.

[12 : 05] They also took back with them 200,000 captives. And not only that, they occupied some of the cities. They took back some territory. So now you got this thing where like Judah is, has been ravaged.

They have been severely weakened, right? That's the position King Ahaz is in right now. Now news had reached King Ahaz's ears just recently that Syria and Israel, they're ready to come back and finish the job. They want to take Jerusalem now. And Ahaz and Judah, what does it say about them? It says they are absolutely terrified, man. Their land has been decimated. Their military power has been weakened.

The prospect of defeating that Northern Alliance of Israel and Syria, man, that looks impossible. Ahaz and Judah are feeling vulnerable. They're feeling powerless. And they're also kind of feeling trapped. And if you live long enough, you, you kind of know what that feels like. Not that you have whole nations waging war against you, but there are things that you can't control. People that make your life difficult. There's illnesses like cancer that you can't heal. Desires that never come to fruition or seeming like they're never coming to fruition. Whether that be marriage or kids or a lost relationship that you desire to be restored. There is the loss of things in your life, the things that you love. When it feels all is lost, it is easy to see how big and impossible those problems are. We can really relate to King Ahaz here. But then in all of that enters God. Verse three, and the Lord said to

Isaiah, go out to meet Ahaz and Sheer Jashub, you and Sheer Jashub, your son, and at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the washer's field, and say to him, be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands.

Like God's talking smack. That's pretty good. All right. At the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah, because Syria with Ephraim or Israel and the son of Remaliah has defied evil against you saying, let us go up against Judah and terrify it and let us conquer it for ourselves and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it.

[14 : 45] Thus says the Lord God, it shall not stand. It shall not come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within 65 years, Ephraim or Israel will be shattered from being a people. And that did happen. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. And he says this to King Ahaz and Judah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all. Another way to say that. If you do not stand firm in faith, you will not stand at all. So God, what we see in the midst of Ahaz's crazy, like that, that whole geopolitical, tough, crazy situation, Ahaz sees the impossible. God has a word for him and he gives it to Isaiah. But God's message says something like we read a whole bunch of great stuff, but God's message says something even without saying it. And it's this, God meets us where we are at. Before Ahaz heard these words, God had already seen everything. He knows everything.

He knows the end from the beginning. He saw the threatening armies of Israel in Syria, and he knew their whole plan, even better than Ahaz's spies could have let him in on. He knew those details. He saw the heart of Ahaz and he saw the heart of Judah and how they were melting with fear and dismay.

He got all those things. And so what he doesn't do, he doesn't say like, well, I'm just going to wait for Ahaz to get it together and move toward me. He doesn't do that. What does he do? He moves towards him. God meets us where we are at. And you know what? God doesn't come with a rebuke. It's so fascinating.

He doesn't come to belittle Ahaz and say like, why are you afraid? What is wrong with you? Man, he doesn't do that. He tells Isaiah, go out, meet Ahaz, because God wants to meet with his people. He doesn't do it on our terms, nor does he wait for an invitation. He is the sovereign Lord. He has a plan, and that plan is not up for negotiation. We have to remember that and realize it. So Isaiah comes and he meets with Ahaz. He's representing God to Ahaz, and he isn't asking Ahaz like, hey man, what do you think? What do you think we should do about all this? He's not going to Ahaz and saying like, hey, I kind of got an idea. Like, I'm going to run it by you. Maybe you can see if you think it would work. No, he doesn't do that at all. When God works salvation, it's always the same formula. God does the saving, and he calls us to stand in faith.

Now that sounds, oh, that sounds beautiful, and it's great. And if you're a Christian, you're saying yes and amen, until we have to be the one standing in faith, until we're put in the place of Ahaz. Then it's not so easy to do, we begin to realize. When was the last time you let go of trying to force or manipulate a situation to get your desired outcome? Instead of just surrendering it to God and waiting and praying and waiting and praying. Now, I do want to say this. There is a time for taking action within God's will, but we also need to learn the wisdom of knowing when our actions aren't working.

[18 : 22] Parents, we want our kids to be obedient and healthy and obedient and educated and obedient and making good choices and obedient and waiting for marriage and obedient and following Jesus, right? We want that for our kids. We want them to be all the things that we weren't, basically. You know, at some point, you have to realize that when they get out of your home and how they choose to live, that is totally out of your hands. You can do the best you can, but like, man, you cannot, like, parenting is not a formula.

A plus B does not always equal C. Maybe some of us in the room have kids that have turned back on the faith that you raised them in. And that, man, that is painful to watch. That can fill you with worry. But you can't then guilt your kids into changing to resolve your anxiety over them. You got to run to God with that, right? And he is there to meet you in that prayer. He is there to meet you where you are at. You know, this week I sat in a hospital room, a very precious man that I've known for over 20 years.

And he was passing on into eternity and his wife was there with him. And we were there, but we had no power and no control in that situation. We had to stand in faith that, you know what, God saves according to his plan. And he passed on while we were all there together. And you could, we looked and we could say, you know, death won, but for a moment, but God won the day. God spoke to Ahaz, be careful, be quiet, which is a way of saying to him, Ahaz, be careful to do nothing. And when you got all kinds of problems that you are facing, that sounds like a strange, that sounds like a strange command.

That sounds like strange advice. But faith really isn't doing nothing. Faith is intentionally standing firm on who God is and his promises. And that's what God's meaning here. It is praying and it's learning to pray the prayer of indifference as we come to everything that men, you know what, Lord, this is what I would like. And yet your kingdom come, your will be done. And it takes years. I want to say years and years and years. I don't know if we're going to ever get this, this under our belts really well until towards the end of our life, after years of practice and humility and learning how to surrender and submit and take our knocks and learning to trust in God and go to him with this stuff. Indifference is knowing what you want to happen, having the faith that God's will is best, and having the wisdom that your wants and his will may not be lining up. And until we get to that place, until we learn the place of living in indifference, of surrender, of saying, you know what, Lord, your will be done. Your kingdom come. We will be convinced, even in a small way, that our instincts, our desires, and our emotions are the truth that we need to live toward. But to stand in faith is to believe that God is with us, and God is for us, and he has the perfect plan. But here's the thing. Even when we don't stand in faith, God doesn't leave us. It's just that his work might take on a different purpose. And that's what happens here. In verse 10, again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz.

Ahaz, ask a sign of the Lord your God. Let it be deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test. So just really quick, sometimes asking for signs is wrong. Other times, it's okay. In the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel demanded signs a few times. But it was from a heart of grumbling. It was from a heart of being angry and mad at God.

[22 : 54] And they didn't want a sign so they could trust and obey. They wanted a sign because they wanted to have their own way. I knew a guy who was cheating on his wife, and he said he was waiting for a sign from God to tell him to stop. Well, he already had a sign. It was the commands in God's word to not commit adultery. That guy wasn't really looking for a sign. He was looking for an excuse not to obey.

That's what was happening. Christians are good at noticing the signs that confirm what they want. Let's be honest. We're good at that. Now, that's not always, but asking for signs isn't always bad because Gideon did it, and God didn't rebuke him for it. Gideon, he asked God to give him a sign to make sure he was understanding and discerning God's will that this messenger that said, like, hey, Gideon, I'm going to send you on this suicide mission to, like, go defeat Midian. Like, he wanted to make sure that he had not been hallucinating from bad kebabs that he ate or something, right? I mean, that's okay. Gideon's desire was to discern that God was the one who was telling him and leading him into this. Now, in this particular moment in Isaiah, it's even a little different to Gideon in that God is commanding Ahaz to ask for a sign. He is telling him to do that. God is realizing that much like Gideon's story, he is asking to believe in the impossible. This is going to take some big faith. And for Ahaz, this threat to him specifically is very real, and it's very personal. His own throne and his throat are on the line. If God doesn't come through, he is done. His family dynasty is ended.

Jerusalem will fall to its enemies. A different king will be set up in his place. So God says, man, ask for a sign. Ahaz, ask for it. Make it big so you can know that I am in this. Make it, man, it can be as deep as Sheol, as high as heaven. Man, go for it. Ask the world.

God is saying, I want to give you something that will secure your faith in what I've promised to do. But Ahaz refuses to do this, and it's not because he's being pious. What he is doing is he is rejecting God. Look what Alec Mottier butchered his name. He has a commentary on Isaiah, and this is what he says about these verses. But to refuse a proffered sign is proof that one does not want to believe.

Pious though his words sound, Ahaz by using them demonstrated himself to be willfully unbelieving, to be the willfully unbelieving man. And since he would not believe, he could not continue.

[25 : 46] This was the moment of decision. Just as the Lord loves to be trusted, as Matthew 8, 10 points out, so unbelief is the unforgivable sin. Now, you would think since Ahaz refused the sign, God just wasn't going to give him one. But actually, God does give him one. Verse 13, and Isaiah said, hear then, speaking to Ahaz, hear then, O house of David, is it too little for you to weary men that you weary my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and she'll call his name Emmanuel. There it is. The sign. The one that makes us think of Christmas and little baby Jesus lying in a manger. And that's good news, right? God is with us.

Everything is going to be fixed. And actually, the sign that God gives Ahaz, it isn't good for Ahaz or for Judah. The sign now serves a very different purpose because Ahaz has rejected God.

The promise of Emmanuel, as it came originally here, is initially a sign of judgment. And this, again, is God proving that he meets us where we are at.

Up in verse 2, Ahaz and Judah are terrified, and God meets them with this message of salvation, invites him to ask for a sign. Now Ahaz has obstinately refused God's deliverance, and into this hardness, God gives his own sign. And this time, the sign isn't an invitation to believe.

It is a prediction of coming calamity. Verse 15, he, this Emmanuel, he shall eat curds and honey, which basically meant he was going to be poor. When he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, for before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted, and the Lord will bring upon you Ahaz and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim or Israel split from Judah. Who is he bringing upon them? The king of Assyria. In that day, in a few short years, the Lord will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the clefts of the rock and on the, all the thorn bushes and all, all the pastures. They're going to be like an invasion of locusts that you don't want and that you can't get rid of. In that day, the Lord will shave with a razor, which is to say like, they're going to bring shame upon you. That is hired beyond the river, the king of Assyria, the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also. In that day, a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will have to eat curds and honey. In that day, every place where there used to be a thousand vines worth a thousand shekels of silver will become briars and thorns.

[29 : 35] With bow and arrows, a man will come there, for all the land will be briars and thorns. And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briars and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

You can understand why Isaiah was probably not the most popular guy at this point, right? But what God is saying is he is going to use Assyria to humble Judah. Now, remember, Assyria hasn't been a threat to Judah thus far. This is not on Judah's grid. They've only been a threat to Israel and Syria. And in a way, Assyria has caused Israel and Syria to force this whole issue and desire Judah's alliance and try to even force them to make it happen by coming against them. But in another way, Assyria could be Judah's salvation if they were to suddenly come and attack Israel and Syria.

And that would force them to focus on the greater threat. So instead of Israel and Syria looking at Judah, now you got a bigger problem and you're going to focus on the alligators closest to the boat, right? Now, Ahaz, he's a smart guy. He sees that as an obvious play. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

And actually he does that. In 2 Kings 16, 5 to 7, it says, this is what Ahaz did. Then Rezan, king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, they came up to wage war on Jerusalem and they besieged Ahaz, but couldn't conquer it. We already talked about that. At that time, Rezan, the king of Syria, recovered Elath. Elath for Syria drove the men of Judah from Elath and the Edomites came to Elath where they dwell to this day. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying, I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the hand of the king of Syria and from the hand of the king of Israel who are attacking me. See what Ahaz did.

He rejects God's help and then he turns to Assyria for help. God time and again had reiterated his covenant love and care for his people. And he was doing that again to Ahaz and say, hey, trust in me in this moment. And Ahaz, he doesn't. And that covenant love was meant to root them in their identity that they are God's people. They are his sons and his servants. Now you see how Ahaz is hardening against God has reached its completion. He is giving away his sonship. He is giving away his servanthood to another authority besides God. And that is what happens in our hearts when we turn to men for rescue rather than God. We aren't just running and using them to get their help. We are giving ourselves to them in ways that only God deserves. And God sees all of this. And so the sign is now judgment. Ahaz has given himself to the Assyrian king. And so God gives him over to the desires of his heart. In Romans 1, it says that's what God will do. Now, what does this mean? In God's judgment, he doesn't withhold our desires from us. He actually gives us over to them fully. Why? So we can learn that they aren't what they seem. They look like salvation. They look like rescue. They look better than God's promises. But in the end, they don't end up serving us. We end up serving them. And as you can see from the prophetic description that we read in Isaiah, they end up taking more than they give.

[33 : 39] Right? They bring desolations instead of deliverance. And yet, God uses these desolations and is in these desolations. God is with us in our desolations. You know, sometimes the desolations are necessary to expose the deeper sins in our hearts. So for example, pornography is a sin. But I would say underneath that sin is a whole host of other sinful desires. Pornography is just the fruit.

Underneath is the sin of control and pride and greed and entitlement. Those are what's at the root of that sin. You have anger and you have bitterness. And those are big sins, but they are just the fruit.

What feeds them is a heart full of pride and self-righteousness and legalism and judgment and the fear of man. That is what is at underlying the roots of those things. And here's the thing. If you cut a weed above the ground, you didn't get rid of the weed, it's going to grow back. How do you get rid of the weeds? You got to pull them up by the roots. You have to get at the roots. You have to get underneath.

And that is what God is getting at with Ahaz and Judah. He is bringing desolations to get at the root of the problem. Now, some of you are in the furnace of a trial right now. Some of you are like, man, I feel like I'm in some desolation. My life in some ways, it looks like desolation. But remember, God encourages us to make the most of every trial. It says so in James. Because in the desolation, he can refine our desires. He can heal our wounds. He can deepen our faith. And I would say this, man, in your trial, in your suffering, don't give Satan too much credit. He might be in there and he might be seeking to take advantage and make the most of it. But just remember, God is greater. Think about Job. His trial was by the hands of Satan. We know that. But the greater purpose of that trial was in the heart of

God. Does that make sense? Like you look at the book of Job and those trials came about by the hands of Satan. But that whole thing was written in the heart of God and the purpose of God. Job's trial brought him into greater revelation of who God was. What Satan intended for evil, God intended for good. And he turned into good. Remember this, in your trial, in your desolations, God is with us.

[36 : 29] Isaiah 8 verse 5, it continues on in the story. Isaiah gets another word. The Lord spoke to me again because this people has refused the waters of Shiloh that flow gently and rejoice over Rezin and the son of Remaliah. Therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the river, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks. And it will sweep on into Judah and it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck. And its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land. Oh, Emmanuel. Be broken, you peoples, and be shattered. Give ear, all you far countries. Strap on your armor and be shattered.

Strap on your armor and be shattered. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. Speak a word, but it will not stand for God is with us. Emmanuel. God has not abandoned Ahaz and Judah. As God is predicting the coming Assyrian conquest of Judah, he suddenly changes the language here. Look at the end of verse 8. God's judgment. He is up to this point, he's talking about how his judgment through the king of Assyria. He's going to sweep into Judah. He's going to fill the land with all of this judgment. And then he pivots and he says, it's going to fill your land. Oh, Emmanuel.

Which is like saying this, Emmanuel, you know what? Your land, you will be filled with God's judgment. God pivots from saying, I, Judah, I'm bringing this on you. And now he is saying, I am bringing this on me because Emmanuel is the truth that God takes on his own judgment to save us. That is what Isaiah is prophesying here. That is what is going on. And it is beautiful. Emmanuel is a sign. Emmanuel is a purpose and Emmanuel is a truth. Assyria, they would come and they would fill the land of Judah with God's judgment because of King Ahaz's sin. But God is saying that ultimately he is not visiting this upon Ahaz and Judah. He is visiting this upon himself. I am filling up myself with the judgment and wrath meant for the sins of my people. Think about this for Jesus. He is, this is pointing to Jesus. This is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus was filled with God's judgment for our sin because we had rejected God.

We are King Ahaz. He was the sign of God's judgment that had come in the flesh. And this judgment had no escape. Isaiah prophesies in verse nine, strap on your armor, be shattered, take counsel together, but it will come to nothing. Speak a word, but it will not stand for you and me. There is no strength.

There is no power. There is no wisdom or counsel or clever plan to escape God's judgment. That is what he is saying. We only have Emmanuel to take it for us. And he did. And it would seem in all of this like, okay, if that's what we got, it kind of ends in a dark place, God taking on judgment.

[39 : 49] And that is part of how Isaiah's prophecy ends in chapter eight, verse 21. They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And when they are hungry, they will be enraged and will speak contemptuously against their King and their God and turn their faces upward. And they will look to the earth, but behold distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and they will be thrust into thick darkness. Now it looks like the promise of Emmanuel ends with a darkness, but it doesn't because look what happens next. Isaiah nine, the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness on them, light has shown you who God have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy, the joy before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. In the same prophecy, he gets to why. Why? For to us, a child is born. To us, a son is given.

And the government shall be upon his shoulder and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government, of his peace, there will be no end. On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice, with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore, the zeal of the Lord will do this. The sign of Emmanuel is ultimately the sign of salvation. We who have walked in darkness have seen a great light. For unto us, a child is born. Unto us, a son is given. Do you believe the sign of Emmanuel today? Do you believe the person of Emmanuel today? Do you believe the truth of Emmanuel today? So the band comes up and we respond. I want to say and remind us, we're about to take communion. And actually, this is one of the signs of God with us, that Emmanuel is with us in communion. And we're going to take that in a moment. But first, I want to say, if you're here and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, before you can come to communion, before you come to the sign, you need to come to the person who is Emmanuel. You need to come to Jesus because he is your hope, not anything else. He is the sign that judgment will come on those who reject him. But he is also the hope of salvation for those who believe and would stand in faith. And he offers that to you freely. Believe in him that he died for your sin. Repent and believe and turn to him. And in a moment, there's going to be an opportunity for you to respond. There's going to be a prayer for you to pray on the screen. You could pray that prayer. And you will then come to know God with you, Emmanuel. And I want to say this to us who are already followers of Jesus. How can we respond? I just want to ask you, how is God working on your heart? What has he highlighted? How has he been leading you and calling you to respond? Is there sin to repent of? Is there encouragement to receive? Is there faith that you are being called to stand firm and maybe there's just thankfulness to return in worship to him? I want us to remind us that God is with us here by his grace and his goodness. He's encouraging, admonishing, correcting, strengthening, comforting because he is for us. Take hold of that grace that he has for you right now. I'm going to give us time to listen and respond to him. And then I would like us to, when you're ready, just go and get communion and take it back to your seats and just remain standing. And I would love for us just to take communion together today and I'll lead us in that. All right. So I'm going to give us all time to quietly examine and respond to God.