

Series: Isaiah

Title: God's Ways and Thoughts

Text: Isaiah 55: 7-9

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**Isaiah 55:7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8: For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9: For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

There is the first heaven—our atmosphere, stars and moon. Then there is the second heaven—outer space, planets and solar system. Then there is the third heaven—where Paul was taken up, where Stephen saw Christ standing at the right hand of God, from where New Jerusalem shall descend out of heaven adorned as a bride for her husband. God says, “**as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**”

We left the Dalles, Oregon late Sunday. This week we drove along the coast on our way to Rescue. One night we slept in a tent. That night we built a fire on the beach. We all sat looking up at the stars. “It is absurd that anyone could think all of this just came into being instead of believing God made all of this!” As we looked up at that sky full of stars, I thought of verse, “**For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**” All God's ways and all God's thoughts are higher than all our ways and all our thoughts. But our text shows us three points which we will focus on.

**Proposition:** Concerning sin, concerning mercy and concerning pardon, God's ways and thoughts are higher than our ways and thoughts.

**I. CONCERNING OUR SIN, GOD'S WAY AND GOD'S THOUGHTS ARE HIGHER THAN OUR WAY AND OUR THOUGHTS—V7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts...8: For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

The Lord says, “Your way is wicked so forsake your way, for it is not my way;” he says, “likewise, you're your thoughts are unrighteous so forsake your thoughts, for they are not my thoughts. And return unto the LORD.”

We were conceived in sin in our mother's wombs. We thought sin is what we do. We thought if we cleaned up our act we would be fine. But sin is not only what we do, sin is what we are. All our ways are wicked and unrighteousness, even all our thoughts are wicked and unrighteous. Our hearts are wicked and unrighteous by nature.

Genesis 6:5: And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Job 15: 14: What *is* man, that he should be clean? and *he which is* born of a woman, that he should be righteous? 15: Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight. 16: How much more abominable and filthy *is* man, which drinketh iniquity like water?

Psalms 85: 1: Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men? 2: Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 3: The

wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. 4: Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent: *they are* like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear; 5: Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

The Voice of our Lord Jesus Christ speaks in the preaching of the gospel. By God's grace, some hear—"my sheep hear my Voice!" Others stop the ear and are hardened—it is because your minds are set on hearing something you can do to save yourself. That is the only thing the dead sinner has his mind set on: his wicked way and his unrighteous thoughts.

Romans 8: 5: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;...8: So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

I will give you an example of our wicked and unrighteous thoughts: when you hear wickedness and unrighteousness do you think only of lewd, immoral sins? They are included. Yet, after the fall, Adam's first act was not an act of lewd immorality but an attempt to cover his sin and make self, acceptable to God.

Man's chief sin is our our vain thoughts that we are not wicked and unrighteous in heart—that we know ways to make ourselves righteous and holy and accepted of God. Vain ways and thoughts like:

- **A reformation of life**—Job 14:4: Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? not one.
- **By the works of the law**—Romans 3; 19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
- **Of joining the church and doing religious works**—Mt 23:15...ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.
- **Searching the scriptures to find life by his our will and works rather than fleeing to Christ**—John 5: 39: Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. 40: And ye **will not come to me**, that ye might **have** life. [freely given]

We have no right thoughts of:

- **How deadly and corrupting sin is**—man looks on the outward, God looks on the heart. "Draw near me with your mouth and honor me with your lips, but your heart is far from me." (Mt 15: 8)
- **Vain thoughts of how God hates sin**—God cannot and will not receive us as sinners—Pr 15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination unto the LORD:...Pr 15:26: The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD:...Pr 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination...Pro 28: 9:...even his prayer shall be abomination....
- **Vain thoughts not knowing the wages of sin is death**—We are guilty before God's holy law. Justice demands we must die—the wages of sin is death. No other way.

Illustration: We see our sin only by looking to Christ. It snowed at our house and I took a white sheet, it looked clean and white. Laid on the snow. I discovered it was not white at all. Likewise, we see our sin looking to Christ. He is holy in thought, word and deed—no lie. Look to the cross to see what it took to put away sin, how God spared not his own Son.

Concerning sin, our way and our thought are not God's thoughts. So God says, **Isaiah 55: 7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD... 8: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

**II. SECONDLY, CONCERNING GOD’S MERCY, OUR WAY AND OUR THOUGHTS ARE NOT GOD’S WAY AND GOD’S THOUGHTS—V7:...let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him;...8: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

Mercy is God withholding from us what we deserve. Sinner, do you think that if you come to Christ he will turn you away because your sin is too great? Our thoughts of how Christ will receive us is usually formed from our ways of showing mercy to those who have sinned against us. We think things like:

- I could have mercy on him but he did this against my person, my character.
- But he did this willfully, maliciously against me.
- But his offense is far too great and hurtful against me.
- But he has shown no regard to my authority or my rights.
- But he has done this to me repeatedly.
- But I did nothing to provoke the things he did against me.
- If I showed mercy he would just do it again.
- But he must first make up for all that he has done for me before I will have mercy on him.

So we apply our thoughts to God’s thoughts of mercy toward us. But God says, **return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon you...For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

Indeed, we have sinned against God’s holy character.

- We have sinned willfully, maliciously against God.
- Our offenses are great and hurtful
- We have shown no regard to God authority and rights as God
- We have done so repeatedly.
- God did nothing to provoke us to sin against God.
- And you and I shall sin against God again and again

But God requires nothing of you and I to make up for all that we have done against him before he will have mercy on us. God says, **return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon you...For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

You see, in order to come to the LORD seeking mercy you must be a sinner. Only sinners need to be saved by God’s mercies. God is plenteous in mercy and God delights to show mercy. But only to sinners who cannot save themselves.

Everything God has done for those who come to Christ was done while we were yet sinners. God’s mercy is that God chose a people in Christ before the world began, and made us accepted in Christ, though God knew we would become sinners

Lamentations 3:22 It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

God shows his people mercy by not consuming us even before we were born-again. God’s mercy is that Christ died for sinners even while we were sinners.

Romans 5: 8: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us

God's mercy is that Christ effectually calls sinners to life and repentance, even while we were sinners.

Mark 2: 17:...They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

In mercy he effectually regenerates us, in mercy he effectually grants us repentance and faith, in mercy he effectually calls us. If you come seeking mercy it is because God has already sought you in mercy!

**GOD DID ALL OF THIS WHILE AS YET WE WERE SINNERS. SO GOD WILL RECEIVE A SINNER! A SINNER IS THE ONLY ONE CHRIST WILL RECEIVE.**

**Illustration:** A sinner who God has just made to see his sin is sometimes hesitant to simply cast all his care into Christ's hand. Orphan boy walking down the street. He came to a big window. Inside was a long lunch line of hot food. There he stood hungry. A man said, "Come inside boy and eat!"

The little boy said, "I cannot come inside. I am dirty. My clothes are dirty." The man said, "Are you an orphan, son?" He said, "Yes sir." The man said, "Son this feast is prepared just for orphans."

Christ says, "This feast is prepared for just sinners!"—Isaiah 55: 1: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2...hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3: Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Don't let it enter your mind that God will not receive you because you are a sinner. Sin doesn't drive us away, sin makes us seek mercy in Christ. So God says forsake your thoughts and your ways, and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.

**III. LASTLY, CONCERNING PARDON—FREE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS—OUR THOUGHTS AND WAYS ARE NOT GOD'S THOUGHTS AND GOD'S WAYS—V7: and [return] to our God, for he will abundantly pardon...8: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.**

But "The wages of sin is death. So how can God forgive a sinner like me and yet remain just? How can I die and yet live."

**Illustration:** Darius walked the floor and could not figure out a way—God found a way!

The only way God could remain just to his unbending law and yet justify his people is by God himself doing the work—by the doing and dying of Christ the Way. God can freely pardon sinners and yet remain just because when Christ laid down his life for his sheep—**the old man of sin in all God's elect died.**

Romans 6: 1: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2: God forbid. How shall we, that ARE DEAD TO SIN, LIVE any longer therein?...6: Knowing this, that our old man IS crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7: For he that is dead is freed from sin.

"Dead to sin" means before the all-seeing eye of God, when Christ died, all God's elect died to the guilt and condemning power of sin. Dead men don't sin. Believers are not dead to sins influence, to sins presence, or

to sins effects. But before God we are dead to the guilt and condemnation of sin. Before God, we cannot continue in sin because before God our old man, who does the sinning, is dead.

God can freely pardon sinners and yet remain just because when Christ laid down his life for his sheep—**all God's elect died to the law.**

Romans 7: 1:...the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?

The law has nothing to say to a dead man. Before God, when Christ was made a curse for his people under the penalty of the law, our old man of sin died to the law.

Romans 7: 4: Wherefore, my brethren, ye also ARE BECOME DEAD TO THE LAW by the body of Christ;...6:...now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held

Romans 6: 14: sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

God can pardon sinners and yet remain just because when Christ arose, all his people arose in him—**so everyone born of his Spirit is dead to death, alive forevermore.**

Romans 6: 9: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10: For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11: Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be DEAD INDEED unto sin, but ALIVE unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Our old man of flesh shall die. It is the same as when we were born: spiritually dead and dying because our flesh is only sin and evil. God has not altered our sin-nature. But with Christ dwelling in us, there is a new man created in righteousness and true holiness, in which we shall go to be with the LORD immediately when we die.

**Now, for the believer, God says, Hebrews 10: 17...their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.**

We could have never imagined that God would give his only-begotten Son to die for guilty sinners. It was a thought which never would have crossed man's mind if God had not first revealed it in our hearts. But it is of God's thoughts and God's way. All our thoughts and all our ways are wicked and unrighteous: concerning sin, concerning mercy and concerning pardon. So God says,

Romans 10: 4: For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. 5: For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. 6: But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise,...9: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Acts 13: 39: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

**Isaiah 55: 7: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9: For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

**Amen!**