

Dr. John Oswalt, Isaiah, Session 22, Isa. 44-46

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This is Dr. John Oswalt in his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 22, Isaiah chapter 44 through 46.

We thank you, O Lord, for this lovely day. We thank you for the life that you have placed in your world. Thank you that the norm is life, life returning from the death of winter. And we thank you and praise you.

Thank you, Lord, that because of what you have done for us on the cross and in the empty tomb and in Pentecost, we too have life forevermore. Though we look at bodies that are failing, nonetheless, we can know that our spirits are alive in you forevermore, and we thank you for that promise. Thank you again for the opportunity to study your word.

Thank you for these rich, rich chapters, and we pray again that you'll guide us, help us to focus on the important things, and help us to recognize those issues that each of us needs to recognize as we live with you and allow you to live in us. Thank you. In your name, we pray. Amen.

All right. We are, as of this moment, then a week behind schedule. If you happen to have your schedule, there's June 10th is the absolute cutoff date for me. That's the last Monday that I'll have free in the summer, so we have to stop then. So, what I'm going to plan is we will do 47 and 48 next week.

The study guide is out there. On the 22nd, we will do chapters 49 to 51, and on the 29th, we'll do 52 and 53, and that will get us back on track again. I had planned to spend an entire evening on 53, but 52 is not that long, so we'll double up a bit.

Yes? You're counting three weeks there, and there are only two. Next week is the 22nd. The 22nd.

So, it is. Let's see. Tonight is the 15th, isn't it? Okay, so we've got to think some more.

Anyway, next week we will do 47 and 48 on the 22nd and go from there. In chapter 44, verses 1 to 5, we have, again, another prophecy of the coming of the Spirit. And we have here the fourth reason why God's servants should not fear.

The first one was, I am with you. The second, I'll help you. The third, I've redeemed you.

Now what's this fourth reason why we should not fear? Verses 2 and 3. Fear not, for I will pour water on the thirsty land. I'll pour my Spirit out upon you. How does that relate to us? Fear not, for I will pour my Spirit upon you.

Why is that a reason not to fear? Well, He's with us, yes. He'll strengthen us. The presence of His Spirit will give us strength.

Anything else? Wisdom. The Spirit is the one who gives wisdom. The Spirit is also the one who enables us to live Christ's life.

So, we do not need to be afraid of the enemy who comes in and says, you're not good enough, you can't measure up. The Holy Spirit comes as the, remember, the word is not comfort as much as it is encouraged. The Holy Spirit comes to be the encourager, to enable us to stand in the face of temptation, in the face of accusation, in the face of all that the enemy might throw at us.

The Spirit is here. Now in this particular case, He says, I'm going to pour my Spirit upon your offspring. What was the fear when they went into exile? That's right, the nation would disappear.

Their children would become pagan Babylonians, and that would be the end of it. But God says, no, I'll pour my Spirit upon them. And what will be the result in verse 5? What will the effect of the Spirit be? Well, they could say, I am the Lord.

All right, there will be that willingness to belong to the Lord, to identify with the Lord. This one will call in the name of Jacob, another will write on his hand the Lord's, and name himself by the name of Israel. So that issue of identity, the Holy Spirit enabling us to identify ourselves with the Lord.

The question that comes through the Bible again and again is, who is the king of your life? Who do you belong to? Who do you identify yourself with? How do you understand yourself? And the Holy Spirit comes to enable us to identify ourselves with the Lord. Yes, I am the Lord's. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

I am His. So that continual issue that comes in the Christian life, is the issue of the will. Do I belong to me or do I belong to Yahweh? And the Spirit enables us to win that battle in a decisive way.

In verses 6 through 8 we have a recap of the case against the idols. Here's another one of the I am's. I am the first.

I am the last. Beside me there is no God. Notice in verse 6, the names.

Thus says, and remember when you see the Lord in small caps like that it's Yahweh. Thus says Yahweh. Now what are the other three titles that are used to identify Him? The King of Israel.

Israel's Redeemer. And the Lord Almighty, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Heaven's Armies. Now what's the significance of piling up those three additional titles with Yahweh? What do they add to our understanding of who God is? He's Yahweh and He's the King.

Once again, the story is told of Churchill and Roosevelt having a discussion. And Roosevelt said, now you do understand, Winston, that democracy is the finest of all human governments. And Winston Churchill immediately shot back and said, yes, and the government of heaven is a monarchy.

So, it's not a democracy here, He's Israel's King. Now what does that mean? He's the sole ruler. And how about from the other side? From Israel's side? Worship Him? And God has an obligation to them.

Israel is His Kingdom. Can He leave His Kingdom in the control of someone else? No, He can't, and so He's the Redeemer. And what does Lord of Hosts, or Lord Almighty, whichever you have, or the Lord of Heaven's Armies, what does that add to our understanding? Omnipotence.

He is able to do it. So, He's got a relational obligation, He's Israel's King. And therefore, He's committed to redeem, and He's able to redeem.

Takes us back to the questions we first talked about when we were looking at chapter 40. Does He want to deliver? Yes. Is He able to deliver? Yes.

Is He going to deliver? Yes. All right, now remember what are the claims that God makes with regard to the gods. We have them here just in very brief form.

There is no god except Him. What can't the gods do? Okay, look at the last part of verse 7. What can't the gods do? They cannot tell the future. They are part of the continuing natural system, and the natural system only knows what it always does.

For something new to occur that has never occurred before, the gods cannot possibly tell that. But the one who stands outside the system, who made the system, He can do a brand new thing, and He can tell it in advance. The gods cannot do that.

It is always interesting to me, that in the world of Old Testament scholarship, almost the first thing that is denied is that there could be such a thing as predictive prophecy. If there is a prediction in the Bible, well that actually, the event actually

happened first, and then somebody wrote in the prediction. But this prophet makes God's godhood hang on the fact that He can predict the future.

And yet Old Testament scholars, so locked into naturalism, say, well, nobody can predict the future. That's right, no human can. But we're not talking about a human here.

We're talking about God. So, fear not, don't be afraid. Here comes the fifth reason.

Why shouldn't we be afraid? Verse 8, yes, you're mine. Yes, and He has told what has happened before, what's going to happen before it happens. So you don't have to be afraid.

This is one of the important purposes of prophecy. Predictive prophecy is not given so that we can work out a timetable of the future. If anything has been demonstrated to us in the last 2000 years, it ought to be that.

Virtually every time somebody tries to use predictive prophecy to work out a timetable, they're wrong. As I told you before, I've always enjoyed Francis Asbury's journal, in which at one point he says, Father Wesley believes that Christ will come back in 1812. I believe it's closer to 1839 myself.

But why then does God predict the future? So we can be confident. God knows the future, God has the future in His hands, and we can live today without fear. How's He going to do it? That's His business.

When's He going to do it? That's His business. But He has all things within His control. Alright, in verses 9 through 20 then, we have a long diatribe against idols and idol-making.

It's dripping with sarcasm. And you notice it's in prose, it's not in poetry, like what goes before and what follows. So, it was not necessarily said in sequence here, but it fits in the setting.

So, if you were going to sum up what verses 9 through 20 say, how would you sum it up in a sentence or two? It's useless to make things out of everyday use, like fire that would burn the wood and that kind of thing. It's useless to make a god out of ordinary earthly material. Yes, yes, that's exactly what he's saying.

And this thing that we've seen over and over again, you can either worship your maker, or you can make a god in your image to worship. Take your choice. Now he says, as we get down toward the end, verse 19, No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, half of it I burned in the fire, I also baked bread on its coals, I roasted meat and have eaten, and shall I make the rest of it an

abomination? Now if you look up at the background there, abomination is a Hebrew word that describes something that is disgusting.

Those things that are disgusting to Yahweh are things that are contrary to his creation order. And I give you a couple of references there, we don't have time to look at those, but if you're interested you can check those out. Now why would idol-making be something that is particularly disgusting to God? All right, all right.

All right. If you put your trust in what you've made, how can you possibly be on yourself, that's what God is. All right, if you put your trust in what you've made, how can that be something if I've made it myself? Yes, yes. Yes, yes.

What are we doing when we worship an idol? Trying to control ourselves. We're worshipping the world, huh? The world that God created. Yes, yes.

That's why it's an abomination. The creation was not given to be used. Excuse me, not given to be worshipped.

It was given to be used. It was given to be cultivated. It was given to be developed.

But it was not given to be worshipped. And so when we do worship that, that's an abomination to God. That's disgusting to God because it does not fit into his creation purposes.

It separates us from God, yes. Yes. Yes, exactly.

Exactly, exactly. I am the God and the idol is my creation. Yes, we've turned the thing right on its head.

I think it is Augustine who said, idolatry is the use of that which should be worshipped and the worship of that which should be used. Idolatry is the use of that which should be worshipped and the worship of that which should be used. So then in verses 21 and 22, if 9 through 20 is an insertion, I'm not positive that it is, but I think possibly it is.

If it is an insertion, then jump back to verses 6, 7, and 8. What are these things that we are to remember in verse 21? Remember who God is. Number one, I'm the first, I'm the last. Beside me, there is no God.

All right? Don't be afraid. And remember how Yahweh identified himself? I'm your King, I'm your Redeemer, I'm the Lord of hosts. So, in the light of that, what does he say then that he has done in 21 and 22? Well, Israel is not forgotten because God has made provisions for her redemption and he is not bound and he will redeem.

Yes, yes. It's interesting, verse 21, I want you to remember, verse 21D, remember that you won't be forgotten. I will remember, I will not forget you.

So, I formed you, there's number one. Verse 22 tells us the second thing he's going to do. I formed you and I have swept away your sins.

I've blotted out your transgression. So, here it is again, this point that is made over and over again, he is the creator and therefore he can be the Redeemer. An idol cannot redeem you because redeem suggests a change in the order of things.

But the one who made you, as a brand-new creature, is able to break into your life and redeem you. Today, when we have gone back to the worldview of paganism, the idea that you and I could be transformed is laughable. Well, of course not.

You are what you are. You cannot transcend your inheritance. You cannot transcend your genes.

You cannot transcend your environment. Transformation? Silly. No.

What is salvation in the modern world? Self-actualization. You simply discover who you are and be it. Become something other than your conditioning.

Become something other than all the things that have gone into making you up. Oh, no. No, no.

And yet, the marvelous stories that you hear. One of the people who worked with Peter and Masha in Russia, went to Afghanistan when the Russians went to Afghanistan. We don't seem to learn much about Afghanistan.

The British tried to do something with it and gave it up. The Russians tried to do something with it and gave it up. And now it looks like we're in the same position.

But became an alcoholic, came back from Afghanistan, became a drug dealer and a thug, and was sent to a Russian prison, which is not a nice place. And somehow there came upon a Bible. And he has been transformed.

And those stories can be multiplied a thousand, thousand times. The Creator is able to redeem. The Creator is able to transform.

And I don't know. No, and I can't do anything for you, except maybe help you actualize yourself. So, for us to talk about a homosexual being transformed is not merely laughable to our world.

It's worse than that. It's a denial of reality. And that's sad.

Okay. So once again, what's happening here? Grace is being offered as a motive to accept this offer of servanthood. I formed you.

You are my servant. Oh, Israel, you'll not be forgotten by me. I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud, your sins like mist.

Return to me, for I've redeemed you. There's the bottom line of this whole case against the idols. They can't save you.

I can. Verse 23, then. Why burst out into song at this point? The creation is worshiping the Creator.

Sing, oh, heavens. Shout, oh, depths of the earth. Break forth into singing, oh, mountains.

Oh, forest, every tree in it. For the Lord has redeemed Jacob and will be glorified in Israel. Look back at Romans chapter 8. The clock here says 20 minutes to 4, so we're in good shape.

Good shape. As long as it's not 4 a.m. I don't know about that. Verse 22.

Excuse me, verse 20. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in the hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning in the pains of childbirth until now.

Yes, creation has a stake in our redemption. If the human race can be redeemed, then creation can be redeemed. So, the announcement of the Creator's redemption is a cause for singing.

If you look back at chapter 42, verse 10. Remember, I spoke to you two weeks ago about the fact that there are two servants depicted here. The fearful servant, that is Israel, whom God is going to deliver, and they should simply rejoice in it.

And then the obedient servant there, who is introduced in 42. So, look at verse 10. Sing to the Lord a new song.

His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea and all that fills it, the coastlands and their inhabitants. What's the cause for singing? God's redemption. And that redemption we are hinted to here is through his servant, his ideal servant, who will make our servanthood possible.

Okay, back to chapter 45. Excuse me, 44. In verses 25 and 26, what is the evidence of God's godhood? His predictions come true.

Whereas the liars, the diviners, and the wise men, they just end up looking foolish. So, what has God said in verse 26? What does he promise? Jerusalem is going to be rebuilt. It's going to be inhabited again.

Now remember what I've said before. When the prophets prophesied exile, the people said, no, it can't happen. If we were to go into exile, we would disappear as a people.

And of course, all of God's promises will fail. So no, it can't happen. When the prophets prophesied return from exile, they said, no, nobody has ever returned from exile.

The whole purpose of exile is to absorb all these separate cultures into one sort of homogenized mass. So no, we're not going to go into captivity. And number two, if we did go into captivity, we would never be heard of again.

So no and no. God says yes and yes. You will go into captivity and I will bring you out of captivity.

Very specific predictions. Yes, I think so. There are a number of possibilities there that could certainly point in that direction.

But now God ups the ante. Verse 28. He names the deliverer.

So you're going to go into captivity and you're going to come out of captivity and a man named Cyrus is going to bring you out. Now again, we're too familiar with this. We know it happened.

But you know, Cyrus who? We don't know any Cyrus. Nebuchadnezzar? Nebuchadnezzar? Sennacherib? Cyrus? Cyrus. So, in chapter 45, verses 1 through 8. Tell us what God is going to do for Cyrus and what he's going to do through him.

Notice 45.1. Cyrus is called God's Messiah. My anointed. My Messiah.

So what privileges is Yahweh going to make available to Cyrus? What's he going to do for him? Going to break down gates? What else? Subdue nations? Strip kings of their ornaments? Verse 3. Going to give him the treasures that are hidden in the dark treasure houses. And why is he going to do it according to verse 3? Here we are again. So that you may know.

Some of you were with me in Exodus. Pharaoh, tomorrow, about this time, the sky is going to be filled with locusts. So that you may know.

Here it is again. But in this case, I'm going to give you the treasures of the world so that you may know. And, why do I want you to know my name? Verse 4. For the sake of my servant, Jacob.

And then I like the last part of verse 4. You don't know my name, Cyrus, but I know yours. Then in verse 5. Another one of these wonderful I am statements. I am Yahweh.

There is no other. Beside me, there is no God. I equip you though you do not know me.

I'm at work in the world. And I'm at work with people who know nothing about me. Not only do I work with those who know me.

I work with those who don't know me. I'm the creator. I'm Yahweh.

And once again. Why is he doing this? Verse 6. That people may know. I'm calling you and using you so that you may know.

And so that the people may know. From the rising of the sun to the west. And here we go again.

That there is none beside me. I am Yahweh. And there is no other.

Do you think he's trying to make a point, maybe? Yes. Yes. Now verse 7. Is often troubling to people.

Especially as it was written in the King James. I form light. And create darkness.

I make peace. And create evil. That's what the King James says.

I have the English Standard Version here. I make well-being. And create calamity.

And that's probably a little more. Precise. But what's the point that is being made here? I'm the Lord.

Exactly. Exactly. Now you see.

This is where. We've got to. Navigate carefully.

The pagan worldview. Sees good and evil. As independent entities.

That are simply part of reality. So why do bad things happen? Well because the evil force. Overcame the good force.

And so bad things happen. The good force just wasn't strong enough. To prevent this.

And when good things happen. That's when the good force. Overcomes the evil force.

And good things happen. This is called dualism. Two basic entities. That has always existed. Call them. Yin and yang.

Positive negative. Isaiah is saying. No. No. There is only one. Eternal entity.

And therefore. Everything that is. Goes back to him.

And it's interesting that. From a biblical perspective. Evil is kind of a negative.

It's a kind of nothing. It's the absence of good. It's not a positive something.

That exists on its own. Now I've said this before. But you forget everything I say.

So, I'll say it again. We can distinguish between primary cause and secondary cause. And tertiary cause. And that helps us.

Did God. Make that bad thing happen to me. No.

But did God permit it? Did he make a world in which bad things can happen to good people? Yes, he did.

So, the Old Testament. Is not particularly interested. In secondary and tertiary.

What they're trying to drive home is. If it happened. God is alone.

Responsible for it. Not some Babylonian God. Not some demon.

Not something else. If it happened. God is ultimately responsible.

That's the point they're trying to hammer home. And that's a very strange point. In the pagan world.

And in the modern world. Okay. Pushing on then.

Once again. Here's this song. Shower oh heavens from above.

Let the clouds rain down righteousness. Let the earth open. That salvation and righteousness may bear fruit.

Let the earth cause them both to sprout. I the Lord. Have created it.

If it happens. I did it. Now, what's going on? In verses nine through 13. Seems like we change gears rather drastically.

What's going on? What is God saying? To the people.

What's he accusing them of doing? Woe to him who strives with him and who formed him. A pot among earthen pots.

Does the clay say to him who forms it? What are you making or your work have no handles? Woe to him who says to a father.

What are you begetting? Or to a woman. With what are you in labor?

Thus says the Lord the Holy One of Israel. The one who formed him. Ask of me the things to come.

Will you command me concerning my children and the work of my hands? I made the earth and created man on it. It was my hands that stretched out the heavens.

I commanded all their host. Now here. Verse 13.

What's he talking about? Yes. Who is the one that I stirred up in righteousness?

Cyrus. Yes. Yes.

Pretty clearly. People are saying. Wait a minute.

You can't do that. Cyrus is a pagan. He didn't know who you are.

You can't use a pagan to do Christian things. No, no, no.

We know how you deliver. We got to get a Hebrew baby. And we got to put him in a basket in the Euphrates River. And the Babylonian princess will find him. And the Babylonian court will train him in administration and military.

Power. And then he will come. And he'll try to deliver us.

And it won't work. And he'll have to go off into the Arabian desert for 80 years. And then after that he'll sort of get his act together.

And he'll come back. And he'll do all the. That's the way you deliver God.

In case you've forgotten. And God says. You are the pot on the wheel.

Are you going to tell me how to make you? I confess I've done that numerous times. God, you're not doing this right.

That's not where you put the handle God. So, he is talking to those who are accusing him of not being able to do what he's doing or not knowing what he's doing. So what does he say then in verses 14 through 19.

Thus says the Lord. The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Kush and the Sabians men of stature will come over to you and be yours. They will follow you.

And they'll come over in chains and bow down to you. Now to that point we might think he's talking to Cyrus. But look how he goes on.

They will plead with you saying surely God is in you and there is no other. No God beside him. So, it looks like no he's talking to redeemed Israel.

Out there in the future. Now here's what the nations go on to say in verse 15. Truly you are a God who hides yourself.

Oh God of Israel the Savior. All of them are put to shame and confounded the makers of idols go in confusion together. But Israel is saved by the Lord with everlasting salvation.

You shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity. Now what is God's response to that in verses 18 and 19? Yeah, I'm God.

I created the heavens. That's right. That's right.

The nations may say boy oh boy you're God Israel. He's really obscure. It's really tough to figure out what he's doing.

And God says no it isn't. No, it isn't. I didn't speak in secret.

I didn't say to the offspring of Jacob seek me in vain. I the Lord speak the truth. I declare what is right.

The significance of this book. If you don't have this book then yeah you can say God's ways are a mystery. Who knows what he's doing.

I don't understand what's going on. God says hey I did not speak in secret. I didn't create this world to be chaos.

That's what the pagans think. I created this world with purpose and with design and I have declared what my purpose and my design are. There it is.

It's very easy for us to give lip service to the book. Now you know I'm preaching to the choir here. You're people who don't give lip service to the book but it's still very very easy for us to do it.

To put it in an honored place but not really to spend the time to figure out what God is saying. Most of you here will be old enough to know what I'm talking about when I speak of the Sears catalog. Remember that? The preacher came to visit.

The lady of the house said to her little boy oh honey go get the big book that Mama loves so well. The kid came back with the Sears catalog. Our children know.

Our children know. I haven't spoken in secret. If you want to know who I am and how I work what my plans are, it's here.

The question is are you willing to dig a little bit to find it? All right. Now then beginning in verse 20 and running really all the way through 46.7 there's a wonderful wonderful picture here. Once again God is calling the nations.

Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together you survivors of the nations. They have no knowledge who carries their wooden idols and keep on praying to a God that cannot save them.

Now look down at verse 46.1. Baal and Nebo are two of the gods of Babylon. Bel and Nebo. Bel bows down.

Nebo stoops. Their idols are beasts and livestock. Get this sentence.

These things you carry are born as burdens on weary beasts. They stoop, and they bow down together. They cannot save the burden but themselves go into captivity.

Listen to me O house of Jacob. All the remnant of the house of Israel who have been carried by me from before your birth. Carried from the womb even to your old age I am he and to gray hairs, I will carry you.

I have made. I will bear it. I will carry and will save.

Now what's the contrast here? What are the pagans doing? They're carrying their gods. And what is the Lord doing? Carrying us. Carrying us.

You can be carried by your maker or you'll have to carry what you made. A lot of us don't have little statues in our houses but a whole lot of us are burdened down with the stuff we've made in our lives. I've quoted this before but it struck me the first time I read it and it continues to ring for me.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said you can only really own something that you can honestly see yourself as better off without. You can only really own something that you can honestly see yourself as better off without. If I have to have it, if I have to have it, it owns me.

So I'm always entranced by that picture. Assemble yourselves and come. Draw near together you survivors of the nation.

They have no knowledge who carries their wooden idols and keep on praying to a God who cannot save. In verses 21 and 22 here's another statement of the case against the gods. Declare and present your case together.

Let them take counsel together. So what is God claiming there in verse 21? I told you this long ago. I declared it of old.

What does that prove? There is no other God beside me. A righteous God and a savior. There is none beside me.

Verse 23. By myself, I have sworn. That's what God did in Genesis 15 when he said to Abraham you will have more children than the stars of the heaven or the sand of the seashore.

Cut some animals in half and the incense pot and the torch passed through between. And the writer to the Hebrews has it exactly right. God swore by himself there being none higher.

When Moses took half the blood and splashed it on the altar God was swearing by himself. May God strike God dead if God ever breaks this covenant. By myself I have sworn from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that will not return.

Over and over in this part of the book God speaks about his word that is unchanging and will accomplish its purpose. To me every knee shall bow every tongue shall swear allegiance. Paul is clearly picking up on this verse as he speaks of Jesus who has humbled himself even unto death.

Every knee will bow and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is and what did that mean to a Jew? Yahweh. See we miss that. Oh, Jesus Christ is boss.

Jesus Christ is in charge. Jesus Christ is Lord. Jesus Christ is Yahweh.

That's the shocking thing that that early Christian creed means. Jesus Christ is Lord. He is Yahweh.

Okay. We actually are coming close to finishing on time. Not quite but anyway.

Chapter 46 really then sums up everything that has been said in these previous four chapters. Number one this picture of God who carries us. He made us and he'll carry us.

Then verses 5, 6, and 7 wrap up that idea. To whom will you liken me and make me equal and compare me that we may be alike? Do you remember where we saw that last? Chapter 40. Those who lavish gold from the purse weigh out silver in the scales, hire a goldsmith, he makes it into a god and they fall down and worship.

They lift it to their shoulders. They carry it. They set it in its place and it stands there.

It cannot move from its place if one cries to it, it does not answer or save him from his trouble. There's your choice. You can make your own god but in the end, it can't help you.

Remember this. Stand firm. Recall it to mind you transgressors.

Remember the former things of old. Remember I predicted all this because I'm not a god. I'm the creator who stands outside the circle of time.

And here's the last of these I am's. I am God and there is no other. I am God, there's none like me.

Declaring the end from the beginning. Back there in the beginning I declared the end. You see in a circular world, in a circular view of time, there is no beginning and there is no end.

The ancients imagined time as a snake eating its own tail. There is no beginning and there is no end. God says yes there is.

In the beginning, I declared how things are going to end. Saying my counsel will stand and I will accomplish all my purpose. The gods have no purpose except survival with a maximum of security and comfort and pleasure.

God has a purpose. That we should share his character. That we should have fellowship with him forever and ever.

Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from the far country. I have spoken, I will bring it to pass. I have purposed, I will do it.

Now God has no illusions about these people. Listen to me you stubborn of heart. You who are far from righteousness.

I bring near my righteousness. It is not far off. And my salvation will not delay.

I will put salvation in Zion for Israel my glory. Now what's the point of that? Let's talk about this and then we'll close. What can we do that will cause God to redeem us? Good, good, good.

I was hoping for that. Because that's exactly right. Not their repentance.

Not their faith. Grace is totally God-initiated. They have not done one thing to deserve this redemption that God is promising.

And neither can you or I. That's the whole point of Romans chapters 1 through 5. There is nothing you and I can do. It is wholly from God's point of view and that ought to motivate us then. That ought to motivate us to repentance.

It ought to motivate us to have faith. And it ought to motivate us to godliness. I want to be like the one who without any justification whatsoever reached down into the pig pen and said, come home.

Those of us who attend the Nicholasville church heard the prodigal son story again. Actually, that's really misnamed. It's not the prodigal son, it's the prodigal father.

But, but no parable is complete in and of itself. If that story were really complete the father would have gone to the far country and gotten into the pig pen with the boy. Again, please don't misunderstand me.

I'm not suggesting Jesus didn't get it right. Never. But I'm simply saying that if we were talking about a parable of grace that's what it would be.

It's not me getting it right and oh yes, okay, I'll turn around and dad is waiting back there for me and finally, when I get there he'll love me. No, it goes beyond that. It goes beyond that.

Let's pray. Thank you Father. Thank you that when we were helpless in our sin and despair when we were helpless in our arrogance and our pride you came to us in our unrighteousness and in Jesus Christ gave us everything we needed for redemption and godliness. We testify you are the great I am. You are life. You are the source of life. You are everything in yourself and you have given it all to us for free. Don't you

understand lord how foolish that is? I mean, we could just take your gifts and trash them. But you love us that much that you're willing to take the risk of us breaking your heart.

Thank you. Each of us in this room would say to you tonight thank you for the means of grace in our lives. For some of us parents, some of us Sunday school teachers, some of us friends, some of us a spouse, some of us a preacher. However it came lord, thank you for your grace. Thank you for taking us into your arms. Oh, great I am. In your name, amen.

This is Dr. John Oswalt and his teaching on the book of Isaiah. This is session number 22, Isaiah chapters 44 through 46.