

The Master Strategist

Reflecting on the Isaiah62Fast and Pentecost Sunday

Thesis: We are a people who worship and celebrate our God, who is amazing and who is the Master Strategist.

Text: Isaiah 25:1-10

Our God is amazing.

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago (Isaiah 25:1).

There are so many reasons to love our God and worship him. Here is one reason: our God is the one who is worthy of our praise because he makes promises, and he keeps his promises.

God is the promise making and promise keeping God. That is really good news.

And, **our God is the Master Strategist** (Isaiah 9:6-7).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor [Master Strategist], Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Reflecting on the Isaiah62Fast (May 7 – 28, 2023) and Pentecost Sunday (May 28).

The 21 days of fasting and prayer were significant in their historical impact for the kingdom of God and the advance of the gospel among the Jewish people, the land of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem.

Mike Bickle has said that this season of the Isaiah62Fast is the most significant time in the history of IHOPKC. In May 1983, Bickle's new church had 4 Saturdays of divine encounter. Then, Bickle said that they entered into a divine pause for 40 years. The Lord met them audibly every Saturday in May 7 – 27, 1983, during their time of fasting and prayer as Bickle was in about his fourth month as pastor of this congregation. Yet, Bickle believes that this May 2023 was their most significant time as a community.

It was a privilege to join in prayer with more than 12,000 hubs (ministries, prayer communities, etc.) around the world, representing more than 5 million people.

On Pentecost Sunday, we joined over 100 million people on the wall praying for the city of Jerusalem. For 24 hours, Christians in different time zones spent at least 1 hour praying for the protection of the land of Israel, the salvation of the Jewish people, and the peace of Jerusalem.

On Friday night, May 26, as we had our prayer meeting and watched the livestream from IHOPKC, Joshua and I were moved to pivot for Pentecost Sunday. Instead of doing our own service of prayer and worship, we decided to join the historic broadcast from IHOPKC and Jerusalem for their 2-hour service.

Calvary, you entered in fully and connected with the big picture of what God is doing in the earth. I am so grateful for you.

Through the decades, the Lord has connected us to networks and movements throughout the earth. We are so grateful for divine connections and relationships.

As the Master Strategist, the Lord connected us with IHOPKC for this historic time of fasting and prayer. Most Christians had no idea what happened in May 2023. That statement is not an indictment; rather, it is a testimony of gratitude. We asked the Lord not to pass us by. We prayed and told the Lord that we wanted to be right in the middle of what he was and is doing in the earth. And, the Lord has continued to answer our prayers. Praise the name of the Lord.

Journal entry 6'4'23

Dear Lord:

I wanted to reflect on the Isaiah62Fast and Pentecost Sunday.

1. **Pentecost Sunday livestream:**
 - a. Lord, thank you for helping Calvary to fully engage in the livestream on Sunday morning.
 - b. That seemed like such a risk. I was unsure if people would stay or get up and leave.
 - c. However, the day was remarkable. Our people were fully engaged in the time of worship, intercession, and processing.
 - d. We got connected to what you, O God, were doing globally, and it feels so good to be part of something way bigger than us. Everyone seemed to feel that way.
2. **Tears during the service on Pentecost Sunday.**

- a. Dear Lord, I found myself crying throughout the service on May 28. I was unsure why.
 - b. Eventually, I think I became aware that these were tears of gratitude. I am so grateful that you connected us with the Isaiah62Fast and 100 million intercessors for the land of Israel, the salvation of Jewish people around the world, and peace for the city of Jerusalem.
 - c. At the end of the service, Anna Blanc led us in singing *Songs for Jerusalem*. Anna has our DNA in her from Calvary, as she grew up here. Joshua pointed out that Anna was actually leading that song with 100 million people online. Amazing!!
 - d. Then, the worship team at King of Kings Church in Jerusalem began to sing David Brymer's song, *You Are Worthy of It All*. Again, someone connected to Calvary, who has our DNA and who grew up part of the time here, wrote a song sung with 100 mission intercessors. I was so grateful.
 - e. I wanted to wrap up the morning, but I couldn't get composed. So, I asked Joshua to close the service. He did a great job. Praise the Lord.
3. **The Pause** at IHOPKC on May 28, 1983, until May 28, 2023.
- a. Several times on Friday night, May 26, and on Sunday morning, May 28, Mike Bickle referred to the time Bob Jones stood up and declared a pause. What happened during May 7 – 28, 1983, in KC, set their direction for eternity. They had 4 supernatural Saturdays in May 1983 where you spoke audibly. Then, the pause. All of those promises were for later, Bob Jones said.
 - b. Obviously, Mike Bickle and the IHOPKC team have had a tremendous impact around the world over the last 40 years. And, God has done so much. However, all that happened in 1983 set the stage for May 2023 and is for this generation. Mike says that he is just the keeper of the story.
 - c. When I heard "The Pause," I felt a witness in my spirit. All those prophetic words, all those directions through all the years, seemed to be on hold. Our journey is so similar to IHOPKC. I wonder if this is that--the fulfillment of the pause at Calvary. Please make it so, O Lord, that this is the time we enter in more fully to our destiny in Christ.
4. **God touched me significantly** on Friday, May 26, after the noon gathering, on Saturday morning, May 27, after the morning prayer time, and on Sunday, May 28, during the service.
- a. I think that the tears indicated that you, O Lord, were tenderizing my heart.
 - b. And on Pentecost Sunday, I believe that the tears were also tears of joy, for letting me and us be a part of what God is doing in the earth in his historic moment.

5. **The commitment of the noon prayer leaders was awesome.**
 - a. Margaret picked a group of people to facilitate prayer from 12:00 – 1:00pm, Monday – Friday.
 - b. Those leaders owned the meetings and did a great job.
 - c. We had a good group of people who came regularly, from 6 – 12 people... even as many as 17 during the first week.
 - d. Thank you, Lord, for the way that Calvary showed up to pray.
6. **Confirmation about the networks and relationships which God has given to us.**
 - a. Lord, I feel like you have given to us the divine relationships and connections you want us to have, and that we were already in committed relationships with the Union Baptist Association, Doug Stringer and Somebody Cares, Mosy Madugba and the Ministers Prayer Network, Loving Houston, Greater Houston Prayer Community, Valson Abraham and India Gospel Outreach, and Mike Bickle and many other friends in Kansas City and at IHOPKC.
 - b. Thank you, Lord, for connecting us in accountable relationships.
 - c. Thank you, Lord, for letting us be a part of The Vineyard Movement, the intercession and prophetic movement in Kansas City, Azusa Now with Lou Engle, The Send with Andy Byrd, the Isaiah62Fast, Loving Houston, Faithwalking, and so many other movements locally and globally.

Our God is amazing.

Over the last week of the Isaiah62Fast and for the last couple of weeks, I have been focused on Isaiah 25.

Let's look at Isaiah 25, which is part of an end-times passage from Isaiah 24 – 27.

1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago.

1. Let's just stop and pray this verse back to the Lord.
2. You, O Lord, are my God; you are our God.
3. We exalt you. We praise your name—who you are.
4. We declare that you are faithful.
5. You are amazing and you do marvelous things, miraculous divine acts of salvation and fulfillment of your word.
6. You who see the end from the beginning give your word and keep your word.
7. We worship you.

2 You have made the city a heap of rubble, the fortified town a ruin, the foreigners' stronghold a city no more; it will never be rebuilt. 3 Therefore strong peoples will honor you; cities of ruthless nations will revere you.

1. This song of thanksgiving in Isaiah 25:1–5 functions as the response of God's people for the victory he will win over his enemies and for the establishment of his reign as king over heaven and earth (24:1–23). (Gary V. Smith, Isaiah 1–39, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 428.)
2. Because of your actions, O God, strong people and ruthless nations will honor you and glorify you. When all human strength and pride is removed, many will turn from their own ways and glorify God.

4 You have been a refuge for the poor, a refuge for the needy in his distress, a shelter from the storm and a shade from the heat. For the breath of the ruthless is like a storm driving against a wall 5 and like the heat of the desert. You silence the uproar of foreigners; as heat is reduced by the shadow of a cloud, so the song of the ruthless is stilled.

1. We praise you, O God, because you are the protector of the poor, the marginalized, and those in need.
2. In the time of persecution and weakness, God mercifully becomes a refuge and stronghold of protection for those who cannot protect themselves.

6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine— the best of meats and the finest of wines. 7 On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; 8 he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove the disgrace of his people from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

1. On God's holy mountain, he will gather people from all over the world to a joyous celebration.
2. The reference to "this mountain" suggests that the banquet is closely connected to events in Isaiah 24:23 when God reigns as king from Mount Zion. This wonderful feast is very similar to what the Psalmist envisions when God finally rules the earth in Ps 22:25–31. This picture of blessing, fruitfulness, and prosperity presents a stark contrast with the desolation, withering, death, ruin, and curse on the earth in chap. 24. (Gary V. Smith, Isaiah 1–39, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 432.)
3. And, in addition to the food and provision for all peoples in the kingdom of God, the Lord will:
 - a. Swallow up and destroy death, which covers all the people.
 - b. Wipe away every tear.

- i. This includes tears shed when people die, but also tears of oppression, sickness, pain, disappointment, loneliness, rejection, military defeat, financial trouble, and other kinds of loss.
- c. Remove the disgrace from his people around the world.
 - i. When people are reproached, they are objects of derision, mockery, shame, and humiliation by others.
 - ii. These evil actions will no longer be experienced.

9 In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." 10 The hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain... (Isaiah 25:1-10).

1. God is the one who saves us, not any human leader or political process. His saving acts are a part of the wondrous deeds (in Isaiah 25:1) he graciously performed for those who exalt him as their God. All credit and glory gets directed to God.
2. This is who our God is: (a) we chose to place our trust in God in the past; and (b) now we rejoice because of what God is doing, has done, and will do.
3. By putting his hand on Mt. Zion, God promises to continually guide and protect his people.
4. Praise the Lord, Calvary. This is your God! **Our God is amazing.**

The Master Strategist.

1. *And his name will be: The Wonderful One! The Extraordinary Strategist! The Mighty God! The Father of Eternity! The Prince of Peace! (Isaiah 9:6c TPT).*
 - a. *The Wonderful One:* He is wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous.
 - b. *The Extraordinary Strategist:* The word "counselor" can mean the Lord who demonstrates his extraordinary wisdom to plan wonderful and miraculous things and to carry out his plans with strategic skill and insight.
 - i. For example, think about how *The Extraordinary Strategist* turned the tables on the Evil One at the Cross of Christ. And, the Lord has been at work in your life and mine like that, with the long view in mind.
 - ii. Another translation calls the "Counselor" the Master Strategist.
 - c. *The Mighty God:* There is something special and unique about this son that causes him to have God's name.
 - d. *The Father of Eternity:* "Father" is a relatively rare way of describing God in the Hebrew Bible (Deut. 32:6; Jer. 3:4, 19; Isa. 63:16; 64:7; Mal. 2:10) and a rarer way of describing a king... (1 Sam. 24:12). Since fathers were

the heads of tribes who wisely led the people, it is a fitting title for a ruler.... “Everlasting” is a title that does not apply to any human ruler, except that the Davidic promise speaks of one who will rule on the throne of David forever (2 Sam 7:16). Since Isa. 9:7 refers to a person ruling forever on the throne of David, the “everlasting father” in Is. 9:6 must be the same ruler (Smith, G. V. (2007). *Isaiah 1–39*. (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (p. 241). Nashville: B & H Publishing Group.)

- e. *The Prince of Peace*: He is the official of wholeness and well-being who promotes human flourishing.
 - f. **Announce it and declare it!** *The-extraordinary-counselor-is-the-warrior-God, the-everlasting-Father-is-an-official-for-well-being* (Goldingay, J. (2015). *Isaiah for Everyone*, p. 40). Hallelujah!
2. *His ruling authority will grow, and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings. He'll rule from the historic David throne over that promised kingdom. He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing and keep it going with fair dealing and right living, beginning now and lasting always. The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies will do all this (Isaiah 9:7 MSG).*
- a. Four things are known about the government this ruler will establish.
First, when this new son rules, he will limitlessly expand his influence and create peace without end (cf. Ps 2:8). This promise implies that no one will be able to successfully oppose his authority or undermine the positive effects of his government. Such strong statements imply that Isaiah is talking about the final eschatological ruler. **Second**, this ruler will reign on the throne of David and reestablish his kingdom. This pledge certifies beyond the shadow of a doubt that the text refers to the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic covenant through a “messianic” figure. **Third**, his method of ruling will be based on the principles of justice and righteousness. This fact is consistent with the emphasis on justice in 11:4–5 (and 7:15) and contrasts with the behavior of Ahaz, Judah’s present king. **Fourth**, this Davidic ruler will reign forever as explained in the Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:16). These descriptive parameters, titles, time frame, and interlinking references to the Davidic promises rule out any attempt to identify this son with Ahaz, Hezekiah, or Josiah. **Finally**, Isaiah offers a rhetorical assurance to his listeners concerning the fulfillment of this promise. Simply stated, God Almighty himself will do it. With unassailable zeal, determination, and passion God will concentrate his efforts to accomplish this marvelous deed. Isaiah’s listeners can be absolutely sure that an omnipotent, sovereign God will stand behind the fulfillment of this wonderful plan (Smith, G. V. (2007). *Isaiah 1–39*. (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (p. 242). Nashville: B & H Publishing Group).

3. *Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this (Isaiah 9:7 NIV).*
 - a. Kingdom of God in the NT is represented by the word *shalom* in the OT.
 - b. Shalom: wholeness, well-being, peace, prosperity, safety, and human flourishing; it is so much more than the absence of conflict.
4. Announce it and declare it! The kingdom of the Lord extends and expands forevermore. It is the kingdom of wholeness, well-being, prosperity, safety, and human flourishing. The zeal of the Lord guarantees it and makes it so.
Hallelujah!

Summary:

We are a people who worship and celebrate our God, who is amazing and who is the Master Strategist.

God is the promise making and promise keeping God. That is really good news.

And, our God is at work in this world and in your life with awesome attention to detail. What a God whom we get to know, serve, and partner with.

Ministry Time: