

THE BIG IDEA: Without bad news, the Good News would just be news.The Take-Off

Merry Christmas ... officially!

I trust that however the Thanksgiving holiday found you, you remembered a Father who is good and whose promises are true.

Even if you've struggled over the holiday, the promise in the middle of a lament is for you:

Lamentations 3:21-23 (NLT)

We have prayed for mercy to fall this Christmas here at The Gathering, and that's the premise behind our December series "Let it Snow"

I want to take this morning to introduce the verse that our series title comes from and lay the foundation that we can build on over the next few weeks

So let's read the verse, and then let's take our time working through it.

Isaiah 1:18 (NLT)**1. Come**

- a. This is a call for US to move toward HIM
- b. Why? Because WE are the ones who have moved away (the first 17 verses make that clear)
- c. The invitation to come is woven throughout Scripture
 - **Matthew 11:28** / We can come when we're weary
 - **Isaiah 55:1** / We can come when we're thirsty
 - **John 14:6** / We can come because Jesus made a way, because He is The Way
 - **John 6:44** / We can come because Jesus made the first move
 - **John 5:40** / We can choose to not come
 - **Revelation 22:17** / We're called to come even in the last verses of the Bible

2. Now

- a. There is an urgency to the call to come
- b. Have you noticed that we tend to put off what we don't believe
- c. Need proof?
- d. **[IMAGE / Check engine light]**
- e. I need to confess something that may cause you to feel a certain way about me, but I'm going to tell on myself so you can see how we put off the urgent in real life because we don't actually believe it's urgent
- f. I've been getting airbag recall notices for over a year now ... for all 3 of our cars
- g. I still haven't taken the cars in
- h. **Revelation 1:3** / Why obey? Because the time is near.
- i. Come, now...

3. Let's settle this

- a. Your translation may have "let's reason together" and I've always thought of that as God wants to have a discussion with me about where I've been and what I've done and how I feel about all of that
- b. But the NLT word "settle" is a much better representation of the Hebrew word "yā·kahh"
- c. It's a legal term that means "to decide, judge, prove, convict"
- d. Figuratively it means "to be in the sunshine, to be clear"
- e. We could word the first part of this verse like this: "In light of all the evidence of your sinful heart, we can't move forward to the good news until we settle the issue of the bad news."
- f. Do you know why? **Because without bad news, the Good News would just be news.**
- g. The average life cycle of the news is 24 hours. Really big stories sometimes dominate news for a week.
- h. My guess is that most of us can't remember the news from last night.
- i. God doesn't want the Good News of Jesus to become old news, and so here in Isaiah 1:18 He invites us to come to Him in agreement about who we are apart from Him.
- j. Until that happens, we can't settle the matter of our sin

4. Scarlet to snow

- a. What happens when we accept God's truth about who we are apart from Jesus?
- b. SNOW much transformation!!!
- c. One of the reasons why I love snow is because I have a really ugly yard.
- d. Really ugly!
- e. Snow covers up all of that ugly and makes my yard just as pretty as the other yards around us.
- f. All the sticks and rocks and dirt that won't grow grass is covered up by the snow.
- g. It. Is. Beautiful.
- h. But that's not the takeaway from this verse - God isn't covering up our sin.
- i. If we're honest, that's what WE do!
- j. We don't want anyone to see the ugliness of our lives and so we try to cover it up.
- k. The promise of the snow in Isaiah 1:18 is transformation.
- l. SNOW much transformation!
- m. He said even though our sins are like scarlet, He would make them white as snow.
- n. No cover up. No temporary improvement. Total transformation.
- o. SNOW much transformation!!

The Landing

Now the reality is that the promise of our sins being made as white as snow often has to outlast our refusal to come now and settle the matter with God

For some in the room, the promise of snow - of God's mercy being new - seems so far off that we're almost tempted to think it isn't true

But God keeps His promises, and no matter how long it takes and no matter what we go through along the way, God will let it snow.

[VIDEO / Snow, A Christmas Short Film]

Let's pray