

Noble Things

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[0 : 0 0] But he who is noble plans noble things.! And on noble things he stands.

! Without your help.

We cannot even think noble things without your help. So we pray, Lord God, that you would indeed speak to our hearts today. Call us by your spirit.

Direct us in every way and in every aspect of our lives. Not so that our name can be made known, but so that your name and your kingdom can be made known around the world.

And we give you thanks for this. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Well, I'm going to work with this. And it's been a while here.

[1 : 1 3] I hope I remember I know what I'm doing here. It's been a while since I've been up here. And I'm grateful for the chance to share the word of God with you. There was a movie some years ago by Spike Lee when he was a much younger man.

And it was called Do the Right Thing. And there was this scene in this movie where the late Ozzie Davis is sitting on his porch.

He's called the mayor. And young bloods come up to him and they just beat on him. And you're a waste of time. You're a drunk.

You're not the mayor here. What do you run? What do you do? What can you... You've done nothing in life. And they're just insulting him over and over again here.

And all he can say is, what do you know about me? A young Spike Lee is crossing the street and walks up to him.

[2 : 1 1] And he calls him over. The mayor calls him over. And he says, Mookie? Mookie? Come here.

Mookie comes over, looks at him in his face. He says, Mookie, do the right thing. Do the right thing. Mookie says, that's it.

That's it. I got it. Do the right thing. And he leaves. I don't know about the rest of that movie. I don't know if Mookie actually did the right thing. And the rest of them.

Doing the right thing is awful hard in a world where there is so much trouble. As our brother talked about people going crazy. There is so, so many ignoble things that people do these days.

So many embarrassing things that we humiliate ourselves publicly. And we show all sorts of stuff out into our public, on our social media, and even in person to our bodies and all sorts of things that are going on here today.

[3 : 1 9] And yes, it is not limited to a handful of people, but it's sometimes even done by our leaders. So I'm going to take a little risk here today.

I'm going to talk about politics. Oh, this could be my first and my last time that I'm here in the pulpit.

But why not? The Bible is full of political situations. And as you just read, terms like fool and scoundrel are used in the text.

That does not give you a right to use them necessarily. But it is in our text here today. And so I'm going to take a little chance and do this and talk about our situation.

I'm not going to name names. You know why? Because you're going to name the names. And guess what? In a crowd like this, they're going to be different names for different people.

[4 : 19] You're going to say, yeah, that's him. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And other people are going to say, yeah, no, no, that's her. Uh-uh. Uh-uh. Yeah, yeah. So I'm not going to name names here in the process here.

But I am going to look at leadership, particularly leadership in this setting. We have been having leadership meetings in this church. We've been asking people to step up and to begin to take a vision and focus for what the future of New City is going to be here.

You may be sitting there saying, well, I'm not a leader. Yes, you are. Everybody is leading. You're leading children by your example. You're leading in all sorts of ways. Maybe you weren't in those meetings, but you're a leader.

And we vote in this church. We vote for leaders. We vote for leaders in the church. We vote for leaders in the world. We vote for presidents, for senators, for judges, for mayors.

Real mayors, not like our friend in the movie there. For state representatives. But we also vote for pastors and for elders and for deacons.

[5 : 27] In a few weeks, we'll be voting for some new deacons. Yes, we actually pass out ballots and do this. Because we live in a society that allows us to express our views and ideas and support for people as leaders by voting here.

We have rights here. We have a government that is structured in such a way with an executive office and with a judicial office and with a legislative office.

And they are supposed to be checking on one another. And we have rights in our world here today, at least on paper. And why is this so important here?

You can't tell me this is not important at all because just one decision can affect millions of people.

Both in the church and outside in the world here. One good decision can do some great things for people. And one bad decision can do some terrible things.

[6 : 31] So I want to do something very quickly before I get into the text. I want to take you just briefly into the passage and the world of Isaiah. Because his world wasn't quite like ours.

They didn't have any rights. Try and go up to a king and say, you know, my right is, I think you're, you know, I don't like you here. The king would kindly call the guards and have your head cut off here.

That's what you can do when you're a king in Isaiah's ancient world. His name means the Lord's Savior. The Lord is Savior.

He is a prophet. In the Hebrew, it's Navim or Nevi here. He is the one who in Isaiah 6, when the question was asked, who shall I send and who will go for me?

He's the one who saw the Lord and the glory of the Lord. And when that call came, he said, I'll go. Send me.

[7 : 32] Send me. And so today, if you don't get anything else in this, I hope at the end of this, you might be saying to yourself, Lord, send me to do something noble in this world of ignominious activities and behaviors and wickedness all over the place.

Send me to do something. Something even small. Something that is noble in the process. I hope you get that in our setting there.

This Isaiah also is a someone who was well educated. He was probably possibly a son of a prince. He was familiar with kings. He knew what was going on in his world with the leadership.

He was educated and he was led by the Holy Spirit to write such a beautiful, beautiful revelation. I know some of you may think, you know, you pick that passage because you've been watching too much television.

Yeah, that's that's why. Now, I was just reading the Bible. I was just studying, working through various passages of scripture and just reading along.

[8 : 40] And then I came across this verse and the Lord seemed to say, you need to preach this. You need to share this. You need to talk about this here. So Isaiah was in this context and his book has so many messianic possibilities.

And some argue that this passage is messianic. It's talking about Jesus, this future king that is to come. But it doesn't quite fit exactly with other messianic messages here.

And so it might mean a repentant king that has finally turned his heart to the right.

That is to do the right thing. That is to do the righteous thing. The just thing here. And so, you know, it's Christmas in July here.

So this is a book that has for unto us a child is born, you know, that kind of stuff. A lot of that is in the book of Isaiah.

[9 : 44] But I'm not sure if this is one of those passages here. What was really going on is that Isaiah is writing through the reigns of four different kings. Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

And he lived in a time when bad things were going on and Syria was attacking Jerusalem. And Isaiah goes to the king, the king who has all power and authority.

And he says to him, you need to trust God. Trust God in this situation. Things are going kind of wild here, but trust God in this setting. And the king looked at him and said, no, I think I'm going to make a deal with Assyria.

I'm going to work out some arrangement, some negotiations with him. You can read all of this in 2 Kings chapter 16, 1 through 20.

Isaiah was a 20-year-old. I can see him now. It's a young guy with all the power sitting there. No, I'm not going to do that. I'm going to make a deal. But the scripture says, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God.

[10 : 49] He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. Yes, they were kings of Israel and they were kings of Judah. And he, though a king of Judah, he was acting like some of the kings of Israel.

He even burned his son as an offering according to the despicable practices of the nation. He sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.

That's what the scriptures tell us. Now, you talk about bad leadership. You talk about poor politics. And, I'm sorry, but you know who helped him along?

The priest. The king said, go do it. They said, yes, sir. I'm going to go. I'll go do it. They followed along along the way.

So, they did what they said. And when they do these kinds of things, so do the people. They followed this ignoble king.

[11 : 50] So, we go to our text then. That's the background. Let's go to our text. Chapter 1 says, behold, a king will reign in righteousness and princes will rule in justice. And at first class, as I said before, you might think this is a messianic prophecy.

And it may be at some sense, for Jesus is our king. And he does, of course, reign in righteousness. And he does pursue and fulfill justice.

And there are similar passages in the scripture. In Psalm 72, verses 1, 2, and 4. It says, give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son.

May he judge your people with righteousness and your poor with justice. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people. Give deliverance to the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.

Hmm. But our passage speaks about kings and princes. So, it may not just be about a messianic message alone here.

[13 : 00] In fact, the first word in this passage, behold, it could also be translated to see. Or even it could be translated, when a king reigns, they are like this.

When a righteous king reigns, they are like this. Keep in mind that Isaiah has already condemned these kings and the leaderships from Ephraim and Judah in chapter 28.

From the kings in Jerusalem in chapter 29. The kings in Egypt in chapter 30 and 31. And he has already denounced this relationship with Assyria in chapter 31.

But Isaiah reminds us, these wayward leaders, about their deliverance in Jerusalem.

And he still reminds us that their peace, their hope, will only come when they return and they repent of their sins.

[14 : 02] This is Isaiah 30, the two chapters just before, 30, 15. Isaiah 30, 15. In repentance and rest is your salvation.

In quietness and trust is your strength. Say that again. In repentance and rest is your salvation. In quietness and trust is your strength.

Can we learn anything from that in this difficult time? Can we repent of all the things that we have done?

As we look to leaders and listen to their promises often broken? Can we rest in the salvation of the Lord? Can we be quiet and trust in his strength during this time?

Or do we have to get on something and accuse people of this and call people names and do all sorts of things? Is that what we're supposed to be doing?

[15 : 05] I don't think so here. So there's no surprise here that as Isaiah writes in his passage here, in Isaiah 31, 6 through 7, he says, Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted, O children of Israel.

For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made.

Isaiah is telling them at this point here that they are a people who need, they have revolted. God is speaking here through him. You've revolted against me, O children of Israel.

And you need to come to the point where you cast away your idols of silver and gold. What would those idols be of silver and gold? I don't think those are just symbols.

He's talking about they were spending all their money. They were having big parties. They had reached a point of some prosperity and they were making the most of it here.

[16 : 17] And the poor, the needy people, who cares about them, about those people? Now, we made it. We got it.

We're going to rejoice in it. That was what Isaiah was dealing with at this particular time here. So, to continue on here, he says, that makes sense that you would have what?

Focus on God alone. For in Exodus 5 and in Deuteronomy 5, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5, the very first commandment is, you shall love the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods before me.

And the greatest commandment, according to Jesus, is that you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Yes, prophets preached against idols.

You can't read through the prophets and not see them say, stop worshiping other gods. But that's not all they said.

[17 : 30] That is not all they said. That's very important. It is the first and greatest commandment. But that's not all they said here. They said, and Jesus says this in the second commandment.

The second is like unto that you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the laws and the prophets. There is a vertical side, but there's a horizontal side too.

And when people sometimes say, I care about politics. I just love God and I'll be all right just with God here. I don't know what's happening in the rest of this world. I'm not going to get involved in any of that here.

You're missing out on that second commandment. What about your love for other people? What about your love for other neighbors, especially, especially the poor?

So good and godly kings and princes, wise leaders of all kinds love and care for their neighbors. They love and care for all people.

[18 : 35] They will reign in righteousness, tzaddik, right judgment. That's what that word means. Right judgment, fairness, acting justly. They will rule in justice, mishpat.

That means they make wise decisions. And when they're brought to something and people have to make decisions all the time, they will try to seek the Lord and do it wisely with the power that they have.

Because they've got great power. They need wisdom in those circumstances and in those situations here.

So, in Proverbs 16, verses 10 through 15, it says, An oracle is on the lips of the king.

His mouth does not sin in judgment. In just balance and scales are the Lord's. All weights are in the bag. In the bag are his work.

[19 : 40] It is an abomination to kings to do evil. For the throne is established by righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of a king. And he loves him who speaks what is right.

A king's wrath is a messenger of death. And a wise man will appease it. In the light of a king's face there is life.

And his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain. That's one of the things I love about this book of Isaiah. That's when it's right. When a righteous king is in place.

When a righteous leader is in place. That's when things go well in our context and setting. That's when things give glory to God. And we can rejoice together.

And we can... I just love this imagery that is found when it describes these righteous kings. It's beautiful flowing water and help in such marvelous sorts of ways.

[20 : 41] Now, verse 2 says, Each will be like a hiding place from the wind and a shelter from the storm. Like streams of water in a dry place. Like the shade of a great rock in a weary land.

Some of my people used to sing, My God is a rock in a weary land. Weary land, weary land. My God is a rock in a weary land.

A shelter in the time of storm. That's who our God is. And a leader who follows that God and worship that God and listens to what that God is saying will be just like that.

A hiding place from the wind. He's offering safe places for people to live and move and to have their being. A shelter from the storm. Offering protection and support against the storms of life.

Do people go through storms of life? Or they have real trouble? Real problems? Real issues? And they don't know what to do? And they look to leaders or someone to help them?

[21 : 50] A good leader is ready. A godly leader, I should say, is ready to be that kind of person. A shelter from the storm. And that word storm is like what we just had in Texas and in Kentucky.

Boy, that's a tempest. It's a pouring storm. It's a bad situation here. Imagine, imagine if you had a leader who was a shelter from the storm.

Offering that kind of protection. Streams of water in a dry place. Anything I learned in going to Israel is that water is very important. And when you have a stream of water coming down, it brings hope.

It brings renewal. It brings courage. It brings strength. Streams are like irrigation channels. They bring life. They save life.

And that, that is what this verse is talking about here. A shade of a great rock in a weary land. I've already sung my god is a rock in a weary land.

[23 : 03] So you know what that means. So let me ask you this. Is that what you see in political leaders today? That description of leadership.

Do you see that today? Some of you are sitting there saying, Nah. Yeah. No. Yes. Maybe. I don't. Uh. Do you see it in your church?

Yes. We have leaders too. We elect leaders too. Do you see it in your church? But here's more important here. Here's a good question. Do you see it in yourself?

What kind of leader are you? Are you a rock? In a weary land? Are you a shelter? Do you provide anything to people, especially people in need?

Are you the kind of person who will do the noble thing and be of help in those situations? I'm reminded what Paul wrote in, uh, to the saints in, in, uh, in, uh, the Colossia.

[24 : 13] He says in chapter two, verse eight, see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world.

And not according to Christ. We, we speak Jesus here. We follow his ways.

And what he says is right is right. And what he says is wrong is wrong. And we're going to stick with that. That's what we're going to preach from this pulpit here.

I think we're living in a time, perhaps more than ever before, when the people of God need not to be deceived by the evil one, by their own flesh, not to be deceived by the cacophony of ignoble voices and vain promises of political and church leaders who do not point us to Christ and his kingdom, his ways, his moral variables, his perfect will.

And this is not a political statement, folks, but I'm going to say it anyway. There is no King in America. I didn't, I didn't, uh, join some campaign about that.

[25 : 33] Look right here in front here. We have one King and we have one kingdom. This is not some political statement. Just I picked up somewhere from, from some group, uh, here.

There is no King in America. We have our King, our one King who is here. According to Isaiah, here's what happens when righteous leaders do the right thing.

When they, when they do righteous things and just things, when they do noble things. Verse three, then the eyes of those who see will not be closed.

And the ears of those who hear will give attention. Verse four, the heart of the hasty will understand and know. And the tongue of the stammerers will hasten to speak distinctly.

Again, Isaiah features four human senses that will come alive and will be ready to do noble things. Eyes that have been closed.

[26 : 37] Do you see what is going on really? And I'm afraid this has become even more difficult with AI stuff. You used to be able to say what you see, you know, is what you get.

I mean, it's true here. We've, we've got pictures of mortal enemies and presidents sitting together, fishing together with arms on their shoulders. We've got other pictures of, of presidents being arrested, uh, here, uh, for this, that, and the other.

We've got some dressed up as the Pope, uh, and doing, no, it didn't happen. It's a lie along with the other lies that are out there in our world here today.

You've got to be able to see the truth. See what's there. See what's there. Ears will pay attention. Listen to people, especially hurting people.

Listen to hear, to hear, and not just to respond. Have you done that lately? That's a noble thing. Listening to somebody is an act of love.

[27 : 45] It's an act of love. It's a noble thing to do just to listen. Oh, I can't, I can't run. I had a young man here. He told me he's going to run for the governor, uh, here. And I told him, well, I'm not going to vote for you.

And he said, uh, and, uh, it's not because he's a Democrat. Not because he's a Republican. Not because he's anything else. I said, I'm not voting for you. He said, you young. He said, yeah, I probably won't run until about 30 years from now.

And I said, oops, uh, I don't think I'm going to be around 30 years from now. So I won't be able to vote for you. Sorry. Uh, here, but it's, but it's a noble thing to do that.

To run for an office and to be in this place. It is not dirty business unless you listen to other voices and not to the Lord.

That's what these folks were doing. That's what Isaiah was dealing with. He had people who were listening to, they were listening to all sorts of stuff here. Hearts that have understanding and knowledge, moral character and not, and I'm talking about moral character.

[28 : 53] I'm not talking about necessarily intelligence. There are some dumb, bad people. There are some smart, bad people, uh, here. They're very smart and they're very bad, uh, here.

And a godly tongue that will speak out. It won't stammer anymore. It'll speak distinctly. We sing a song called silence, no more silence, no more silence, no more.

Make some noise. Silence, no more good trouble, necessary trouble. Sometimes you need to speak out and people who are under good leadership and people who are seeking to be good leaders in their way, in their own way will speak out accordingly.

And here's where then Isaiah makes a shift. And I'm not going to take much time on this because my time is, is, uh, is, is running out here. After saying all of this, a well-ordered society, moral and godly leadership and noble character in a well-ordered society, moral and godly leadership and noble character, when that's present, wickedness and folly will be seen for what they are.

Wickedness and folly will be seen for what they are. That's what Isaiah is doing here as God is directing him.

[30 : 10] And so he makes a shift now in these next, uh, five, six, and seven verses here. Not only will godly leadership joyfully pursue noble, noble things, but they will see the sinfulness and foolish ways of leaders who are really scoundrels and villains here.

Look at these verses five. The fool will no longer be called noble, noble, nor the scoundrel said to be honorable. Six. For the fool speaks folly and his heart is busy with iniquity to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the Lord, to leave the cravings of the hungry, unsatisfied, and to deprive the thirsty of drink.

Seven. As for the scoundrel, his devices are evil. His plan, he plans wicked schemes to ruin the poor with lying words, even when the plea of the needy is right.

Hmm. That's what Isaiah was dealing with in his time, in his culture, in his setting. We're talking eighth century BC. I'm so glad those days are over.

We don't have to worry about that anymore. Well, maybe. Oh, me. The fool. The naval.

[31 : 30] Someone who acts stupid, wicked, impious, senseless behavior. He or she is a knave in thought and speech, godless and evil. Yet, did you notice that verse?

Somehow, he had deceived people, and so they called him noble. How does that happen? How does someone who's really doing these terrible things get to be called noble here?

The fool is the very opposite of what we think about when we think of noble things here. I'm going to skip this. The scoundrel is withholding, stingy, ungenerous.

That's what that word means there. Yet, somehow, he has deceived people to call him honorable. We call our elected officials honorable.

We go in a courtroom, and the people say, rise, your honor. And you address them with your honor. And our assumption is that they're honorable people.

[32 : 33] And they are doing honorable things in carrying out the law. And I wish this was always true. But as you know, it sometimes isn't. Have you ever gotten a text from our brother?

It says, pray for our young brother that he will get, and he goes to court today, and he will get justice, real justice, and fairness. That's all we're asking.

If he's guilty, he's guilty. If he's innocent, he's innocent. And just justice here. The scoundrel doesn't want that. Kings and noble leaders of Judah had been showing themselves to be wicked and foolish.

They were seeking alliances with Egypt. They were oppressing the people. They were making all sorts of deals and schemes. But they did not seek the Lord. And on this, I will try and finish what I want to say here.

In Isaiah 30, verses 1 through 3, Isaiah, by the Lord's voice, speaks and says, Ah, stubborn children, declares the Lord, who carries out a plan, but not mine.

[33 : 43] Did you get that? All people will carry out plans. They'll make proposals. They'll write bills. They'll do all sorts of stuff. Who carry out plans, but are not mine, he says here.

And who make alliances, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin.

Who set out to go down to Egypt without asking my direction. To take refuge in the protection of the Pharaoh and seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt.

Therefore, shall the protection of Pharaoh turn to your shame. And the shelter in the shadow of Egypt will be your humiliation.

When leaders violate and do not seek the will of God, the righteousness of God here, and they pursue whatever they come up with and they want to pursue, it will not work out well.

[34 : 51] It would lead to their shame and to their humiliation. I think that is true in Isaiah's day. And I think that is true now, which is why we get to our last verse. This verse I love. This verse preaches itself.

Verse 8. He who is noble plans noble things, and on noble things he stands. That's pretty much all I've got to say about that.

That's just pretty clear. Noble. Nadib. It means the very opposite of what we said about a scoundrel. A noble person is generous. They're magnanimous.

I'm going to use a word. They're willing. What are you willing to do? What are you willing to do? For someone else other than yourself today.

That's what magnanimous means. That's what generous means. That's what noble deeds are all about. Think about it today.

[35 : 53] Is there just one thing, one noble thing that you could do for someone other than yourself that would bring joy to their hearts and glory to God?

This verse really needs no commentary. A noble person doesn't lie and cheat and oppress the poor, the widow, and the orphan. He makes plans that are godly and dutiful and loving and sagacious.

The noble person seeks counsel and wisdom and shares that with him. Yes, in the face of wicked opposition, he stands. He remains committed.

And he speaks up because he will face opposition. When you stand up for Jesus Christ, when you stand up for the king and his kingdom, you will face opposition.

And you will need wisdom. And here is what we can learn from wisdom. Listen. Do you hear anything calling?

[36 : 58] Wisdom's calling you. How do I know that? Proverbs 8. Does not wisdom call?

Does not understanding raise the voice? On the heights, beside the way, on the crossroads, she takes her stand. Besides the gates and in front of the town, the place where you do business and political and other kinds of business.

At the entrance of the portals, she cries aloud, To you, O men, I call, and my call is to the children of man. O simple ones, learn prudence. O fool, learn sense.

Hear, for I will speak noble things. And from my lips will come what is right. Do the right thing.

From my mouth will utter truth. Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are righteous. There is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who understands.

[38 : 03] And right to those who find knowledge. More than ever before, brothers and sisters, I believe we need people who answer that call.

Answer the call of wisdom. You need that. It's a complicated world out there. I'm not going to tell you who to vote for or what, this, that, and the other. I'm not going to get into all of that.

All I ask you to do is seek the word of God. Pursue wisdom. Know what he has done for you. You take your marching orders from the king and for his kingdom.

First of all, I wear a uniform every now and then. I know what it's like to be in a uniform, to be unified with other people here in the Coast Guard.

And I love that work. But I can tell you this. No Coast Guard. No country. No race.

[39 : 04] Sorry, there isn't any race. But anyway, no race takes any priority over my commitment to the king. To do the right thing.

To do the righteous thing. And so when we face that opposition, be ready to stand. Stand when you feel no one's on your side. Stand when you feel the urge to run and hide.

Stand. Stand. Stand. Though you know not what to do. Know that he's looking out for you and he won't fail you. Stand.

Stand for righteousness. Stand for justice. It's not about my political view or your political view. It's about what the word of God says. Would you pray with me?

Father God, we take this moment just to pray and ask. Please, Lord, give us great faith.

[40 : 09] Help us to pray before we plan. Help us, Spirit of God, to follow you, to consult with you before we go off to do this, that, and the other.

Lord, even now, as we're preparing to vote for people, direct us by your word. Direct us by your spirit so that we may choose leadership that follows after your will and your way.

And we will give you thanks, Lord. We trust you. You can do this in us. We can't do it ourselves. We will not do noble things. But we want to do noble things by your grace.

So bless us, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.