

# Bear It All

## Isaiah 20

### Introduction

- If you've ever had a dream where you were standing in public without clothes, you know how terrifying it can be to feel exposed like that. Would it surprise you to know that God once asked one of his prophets to preach for three years BAREFOOT and NAKED?!
- Isaiah 20 tells the short story of God's message to the Israelites, not to run to Egypt and Cush (Ethiopia) for safety and protection during the Assyrian siege on Samaria. To warn them years in advance, he called on Isaiah to spend three years without clothes or shoes, as a sign that Assyria will enslave and strip naked anyone found hiding in Egypt and Cush.
- While we could spend some time talking about the message itself, I wonder if I'd be willing to listen to God as Isaiah did. Would I be committed enough — dedicated enough — to strip down and spend 1,095 days without clothes or shoes?
- Let's talk about dedication this morning, asking ourselves, "How far will I go to follow the Lord?" Though he's not asking us to follow Isaiah's lead, how far is too far? Will you "**bear it all**?"

### Have You Counted the Cost?

- Imagine Isaiah's surprise when God told him to spend three years naked and barefoot! That's probably not the kind of thing he signed up for when he began to work as the Lord's mouthpiece on earth. But, no matter the cost to his comfort or pride, he faithfully followed God's — albeit strange — direction.
- There is a cost to following Jesus, putting him above our family, putting him above our lives, and carrying the cross of shame and ridicule. Don't start what you're not planning to finish (Luke 14:25-33)!
- Like the rich man who went away sorrowful when Jesus told him to sell everything and give it all to the poor, is there some command that would be too much to follow (Matt. 19:16-22)?
- Our sacrifice to God isn't a sacrifice at all if it doesn't cost us something (2 Sam. 24:18-24).
- **Ask yourself:** What do I still lack? (Matt. 19:20)

### Are You Wholehearted?

- Spending three years naked and barefoot isn't something you do halfway. You're either all-in for the Lord, or you're not. And as hard as it might have been to stomach, Isaiah's level of dedication and zeal for the Lord went to the highest extreme.
- Following Jesus with passion and zeal leads us to "recklessly abandon" our sense of what's normal and proper to follow the Lord's command. Like Jesus — an itinerate preacher — entering the temple with a whip, we stand up for what's right without fear of what others say or think (John 2:13-17).
- We fight against the temptation to live lukewarm lives, making sure we love God with all our heart, soul, and strength (Rev. 3:14-22; Deut. 6:4-6).

- We lay our whole lives on the altar, transforming our minds, and living without reservation in love and righteousness every day (Rom. 12:1-13).
- **Ask yourself:** What dark corners of my heart have I not considered lately?

### What Are Your Priorities?

- We could all probably make a list of reasons — rational and understandable — for not spending three years naked and barefoot like Isaiah. It's uncomfortable, vulnerable, exposed, embarrassing, humiliating, etc. But what mattered more than all those things was that God told him to do it, and that settled it!
- But it's so easy to busy ourselves with things — even good things — that distract us from better ones. Are we, like Martha, anxious with serving? Or are we, like Mary, focused on the Master's teachings (Luke 10:38-42)?
- Our whole lives hang on our love for God and love for others (Mark 12:28-31). And nothing distracts us from that goal.
- The Lord expects us to focus on his work before ours. Remember the message to his people who built their own houses while the Lord's Temple was in ruins (Hag. 1:7-11).
- **Ask yourself:** What distractions steal my time and attention away from the Lord?

### Are You Available to Others?

- Wouldn't the instruction to spend three years naked and barefoot have been more palatable if Isaiah could have stayed hidden in the comfort of his home? Sure, but that wasn't the job. He had to go out, be seen by people, and probably live his life like "normal" in his community. The lesson wouldn't have been as powerful and convincing for his countrymen if he stayed in hiding.
- We live in community with others in this world who need us. But like the disciples who tried to shield Jesus from the sick and small children, will we isolate ourselves instead of touching people's lives (Mark 10:13-16)?
- We realize that, though we might have other things to do, being available to help someone in need is always a good use of our time (Luke 8:43-48).
- We pour ourselves out for others, spending and being spent, just like Paul was for the early church (Phil. 2:17-18; 2 Cor. 12:15).
- **Ask yourself:** What parts of myself am I holding back from others?

### Conclusion

- How far will you go to follow the Lord?
- As disciples of Christ, we're dedicated to committing our lives to him, no matter the cost. We're all-in to serve him and put him first in every aspect of our lives. And we live within our communities to shine his glorious light into the darkness.
- Jesus bore it all. Are you ready to follow him with your cross?