

Missions Festival *Sermon: A House of Prayer for All Peoples*; Date: **October 8, 2017**
Delivered by: Zane Pratt, assoc. professor of Christian missions, The Southern Baptist
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Bible text explored: Isaiah 56:1–8

¹Thus says the LORD:

“Keep justice, and do righteousness,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my righteousness be revealed.

²Blessed is the man who does this,
and the son of man who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

³Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,
“The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;
and let not the eunuch say,
“Behold, I am a dry tree.”

⁴For thus says the LORD:

“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,

⁵I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

⁶“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant—

⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.”

⁸The Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,
“I will gather yet others to him
besides those already gathered.” [ESV]

Last week Pastor Moody preached about Jesus anger over the way money-changers and merchants had taken over the Court of the Gentiles, effectively excluding “outsiders” from worship in the temple. This week our guest speaker preached from the passage Jesus is recorded in the synoptic Gospels as quoting from (during a perhaps later temple cleansing).

Review and application:

1. What are the categories we tend to use in differentiating “us” or “insiders” from “them” or “outsiders”?

What (*Gen. 11:1-9*) caused God to disperse humankind into different linguistic and cultural groupings?

2. On whom (*Gen 12:1-3*) did God fix his attention to produce a people pure and distinct from surrounding nations?
But what did God say was his ultimate intention in focusing on this one people group?
3. How did the old covenant writings reflect an understanding of God's inclusive purpose? (See, for instance, *Psalms 67:1-2, 7*.)
But how did many Israelites substitute a racist understanding? (See, for instance, *Jonah 1:1-3; 3:10-4:3*.)
4. On what two excluded people groups does today's passage (v. 3) focus?
5. Why (vv. 4-5) were eunuchs excluded? (See *Deut. 23:1*.)
What monument (or memorial) did Isaiah predict would compensate within the temple walls for a lack of descendants?
To what requirement would they need to "hold fast" to qualify?
How (*Acts 8:26-32 and 35-38*) was this prediction promptly fulfilled under the new covenant?
6. How (vv. 6-7) would proselytes (Gentile converts) be fully accepted?
Was the basis of their inclusion the same as for eunuchs?
7. Besides the Jewish exiles (v. 8), what "yet others" must be brought in to make God's house of prayer extend to all peoples? (Zane Pratt stressed the distinction between "all people" and "all peoples.")

Professor Pratt wryly noted that the biblical requirement of loving our neighbors and our enemies doesn't allow for many exceptions.

8. How can you show kindness and hospitality to those who are near you now?
How could you build a relationship with the goal of sharing the gospel?
9. What are you doing through prayer to see all peoples drawn to our Lord?