

Sermon Text for July 27, 2025

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Isaiah 49:5-6, Matthew 22:1-14

“What happens when your plan doesn’t work?”

It has been a couple of weeks since I last preached, and I mentioned a few weeks ago what a different kind of summer this is, I called it the summer of mission where we have 6 Sundays where people who are serving in mission sponsored or sent out by us come back and tell us about their work and how we are participating in that work. It reminds me of when Jesus sent out the 70 and tells them to come back and report once they are done. We are getting that reporting done for us this summer.

One thing I found while our family was on the mission field is that planning is absolutely crucial in your work. We have already started planning for the senior high mission trip to Italy in 2026 and there are so many details and logistics that go into an overseas mission trip that without planning it turns into a disaster. But what I also found is that as much as you want to plan, things change and so your plans change. Last time we went to Italy because of Italy all of the places we wanted to see had to be reserved, which in my 25 years of doing mission trips to Italy had never been the case. But we pivoted and we were able to see everything we wanted to see.

For many people, and I am one of them, when plans change it leaves us with a bit of a feeling of being let down and it can make it hard to pivot to problem solve and come up with another solution, but often that solution is an even better one. I don’t like it when my plans change, but fortunately I have planned enough that options and possibilities reveal themselves because of the planning that has been done.

Both of our Scriptures today, thanks be to God, we see God’s plans of having his people that he hand chose, those who came through Abraham and Jacob, those that he hand picked to serve him and love him and that he expected and wanted to bring about the kingdom, well, they are unfaithful, they are disobedient and so he has to pivot and change his plans and those second plans, thanks be to God, includes us.

The change that we see of God’s kingdom being selectively open to the few, those who came through the line of Abraham, to all of humanity, opens the way for his kingdom to include all people, the good and the bad we read, which includes us, even though in the original plan we would have been excluded. But once the church is included, that’s us folks, it doesn’t become a free for all where we can sit back and give thanks to God that we are included and not have any

responsibility or expectations from God, but rather we take on a responsibility that we have to meet. Let's read about what happens when God's plans change.

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Let's go back into our Isaiah Scripture. You know, we had a really good showing of people last Thursday evening at our Bible Study. It has been over 5 years that we have been doing this virtual Bible Study on Youtube and the emphasis has been on opening Scripture today and reading it together, and I would love for us to do that on a consistent basis here in church as well. Let's turn to Isaiah and what we find is the prophet Isaiah, who was called by God to speak truth to the king of the people of God. He lays that out in vs.5 that he is the mouthpiece of God for Israel so that he can bring the people of Israel back to God after they had strayed away from him for so long.

But then we see a transition in vs.6 where God says that it is too small, it is not important enough, that at one time it seemed like a good idea, but now it seems too small to just bring the people of Israel to restoration and back to the side of God, instead now Isaiah is going to be a light to all nations, Israel, Babylon, Assyrian, Gaza, Palestine, so that the salvation of God may reach out to the ends of the earth. There is no longer a preference by God for the people of Israel, but now all people have the opportunity for salvation and dignity and being an active part of the kingdom of God. This is a change in plan people. This is not how it was supposed to be.

If the people of Israel had obeyed God then things would have remained as they were, but they didn't, and so now included in God's plan of salvation are those outside of Israel, which is us. We see this in the garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve are kicked out. That wasn't part of the plan, they were supposed to live with God forever. We see it with Moses where he was supposed to bring his people to the promised land but he didn't, because the people of God rebelled against God and Moses also disobeyed. At the root of this change of plans is the sin of the people of God. When we sin, plans change, God's plans change for us and for those around us. We see it all through Scripture.

But with this change of plans, guess who gets to benefit? Well, us, all of humanity. We were not part of the plan until the sin of Israel. The change of plan for the salvation of all of humanity is then brought about by Jesus whose act upon the cross stretched out to all of humanity. Let's look at the Matthew reading for today to see how Jesus explains this in a parable.

Jesus is still in the temple arguing with the religious leaders a few days after Palm Sunday and a few days after he has just cleaned out the temple of money changers and buyers

and sellers. Remember that scene? We were still in that time period. Palm Sunday is the Sunday before Jesus is killed on a Friday, so here we are about a Tuesday or so with Jesus in the temple. He tells the parable, a story with a specific meaning meant to get the attention of the religious leaders and the crowd who was listening, about a king who held a wedding banquet for his son. The feast is ready, he sends out his servants to get the invited guests to come and let them know that it is ready, but they refuse to come.

In fact, we read that a farmer and a businessman laugh at the messengers and leave, and others who have been invited take the messengers and abuse them and kill them. The king had a plan, let's have a wedding feast for my son, but that plan was clearly not working out. A lot goes into planning a wedding. We are involved in helping Rachel out with her wedding. It is going to be beautiful, it is going to be perfect, but it takes a lot of planning. Rachel is getting married on Whidbey Island, which poses its own challenges, and in a house that is spectacular and out on the lawn of the house, which again, has its benefits, but also its logistical and planning challenges.

A lot goes into this planning, and every single detail, from the food and the decorations and the port a potties and the tent or not to tent, all of that is crucial to the success of the wedding ceremony, of course not for the success of the wedding itself and the marriage, but for the ceremony. And you can make all of these plans but if no one shows up, then of what use is it and all that planning is for nothing. This is what this king is facing, and then those he invited killed his messengers, which clearly showed that he had to pivot, because as vs.8 states the guests were not worthy. So we have a banquet, a feast, that is completely ready, but no guests. What do you do when your plans don't come through. You make other plans.

Go out into the streets and invite anyone you meet, bring everyone in. This Scripture is so precious, so much so that in this summer of mission I think we found a new theme: Look at vs.9 – “Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find.” That's our motto, isn't it, for this church. Go out and invite everyone you find. This is our mission. We don't pick and choose who can and who can't worship on Sunday morning with us, in fact, we ought to choose based upon what we read in vs. 10. We have to invite the good and the bad. The worthy and the unworthy. I love this concept.

I was playing golf on Monday and I was paired up with a young guy who was very active in his church. The whole round we were talking about church, what works and what doesn't work. He asked me the question, what do you guys do well. I could have gone programmatically and talked about our kids programs, our youth programs, our Bible Studies.

But I went with, I think we do a good job with our relationships so that all people know that they are welcome no matter who they are. The vast majority of the young families that come into this church are from unchurched backgrounds, where they were not going anywhere before they came here. So they found a place here where they are accepted for who they are and don't have to pretend to be perfect. Churches are breeding grounds for people who think they are perfect, or think they have to be perfect.

We know we don't have to be perfect to be a part of this community, if you ever have a doubt, just look at the pastor, a model of imperfection. The main motif in this Scripture is invitation, everyone is invited and our growing edge has to be people who have not felt invited to the party. Luke in his parable spells out who the good and the bad are and he says in this same parable in Luke 14:21, go out and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. Just like in Isaiah where the banquet and the feast was prepared for those that God had originally invited, now it is open to all, literally everyone on the face of the earth.

But then something happens in vs.11, did you notice. A man who is part of this group, the good and the bad, remember, that's us, is sitting down minding his own business when the king walks in and singles him out and says: what in the world are you wearing? Are you kidding me? Take him, bind him, and throw him into hell. Wait, what? He addresses the man as friend. You know who Jesus addresses as friend in Scripture: Judas, in the garden of Gethsemane before Judas betrays him with a kiss. Not great company. So what is happening, why didn't I just skip these verses?

Because the wedding garment, the clothes that this man was supposed to be wearing are spelled out for us in Revelation 19:6b-8 where we find the description of a bride adorned for her husband, which is the church, that's us, adorned for Jesus, the groom. For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. What caused God's plans to change. The unrighteousness of His people. What caused God to pivot, the unfaithfulness of his people. What caused God to send out the invitation to those that no one would have ever expected to be invited, the original guests were not worthy, they were not righteous.

There is a transfer of Israel's privileges to the church which has come about because of the disobedience of the people of God. The required garment for the church is righteousness. This is key, even though all are invited, our role is to live out our life as guests of the king, in righteousness. This man accepted the invitation to the Gospel but refused to conform his life to the Gospel. But before we get too complacent, the future judgment of the church will revolve around righteousness.

Church, we have been called, both good and bad, into God's kingdom, praise be to God. But before we bask in our privilege of being children of God, remember what Jesus said, who is my family? Look at Matthew 12, he says only those who do the will of my father, only those who act according to the will of God, only those who pursue and strive after righteousness. This is a sobering reminder of the necessary discipleship of those who respond. Matthew never tires when he talks about righteousness, does he? Amen.