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Sermon Notes

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## **Who May Dwell with the Infinitely High and Holy God?**

### **Isaiah 57:1-21**

As we come to Isaiah 57, we come to a stunning verse right in the middle of the chapter... Isaiah 57:15.

***Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.***

In this amazing verse, the God of the universe, infinitely high, infinitely holy, describes himself and his dwelling place. But he also describes who he is willing to dwell with, what kinds of people he is delighted to share his holy home with... people who are contrite, broken-hearted because of their sins.

This verse will occupy our attention for just a few minutes this morning, but its vast soaring truths will occupy our attention in heaven for all eternity... we will see how pure and holy God is and how sinful and needing salvation we were... and we will fall down in humble adoration at the GRACE OF GOD in Christ to sinners like us... as in Isaac Watts's hymn, "How Sweet and Awful is the Place..."

**How sweet and awful is the place  
With Christ within the doors,  
While everlasting love displays  
The choicest of her stores.**

**While all our hearts and all our songs  
Join to admire the feast,  
Each of us cry, with thankful tongues,  
"Lord, why was I a guest?"**

As we unfold Isaiah 57, we will see how SWEET and AWFUL heaven really is... "awful" as Isaac Watts used it means "breathhtakingly awe-inspiring"... the kind of HOLY AWE that came over Isaiah when he saw the holy exalted Lord on his throne and said "WOE IS ME"...

We sinners, when confronted with this vision of the holiness of God and his holy dwelling place, will wonder how we... WE SINNERS... were ever permitted to enter in??

“Lord, why was I a guest????”

The chapter continues the rhythm we began in Isaiah 56 of moving back and forth from the WHEAT to the WEEDS... from the elect, chosen by grace, made humble by grace, saved by grace... MIXED IN with the reprobate, the wicked, who are so powerfully described in these two chapters... we go back and forth because that is our present condition... but heaven will not be so... the New Heaven and the New Earth, with its capital city of the New Jerusalem will be as PURE and HOLY as God is

The parable of the Wheat and the Weeds in Matthew 13 that we referred to last time captures the MIXED nature of life in this world... but the end of it will be thus:

***Matthew 13:41-43 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. <sup>42</sup> They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.***

When we are there in that high and holy place, shining with a radiant holy glory that we did not earn, that was given to us by faith in Christ, we will bow down in humble adoration... filled with awe and God and his high and holy person and dwelling place

But the more we can do that NOW, the better!

## I. A Stunning Invitation from the Infinitely High and Holy King (vs. 15)

A. Verse 15 is actually a GOSPEL INVITATION if you hear it properly

***Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.***

God describes himself, his dwelling place, and the people he delights to dwell with... he does it, in effect, to invite sinners like us to repent, be cleansed of our defilements, and be holy in Christ

***2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

B. God Describes Himself

1. He is the “high and lofty One...”

- a. God is infinitely greater than us... so much vastly above all his creation that the gap between him and all of us cannot be measured
- b. This gap even exists between himself and all his holy angels, who are morally pure

i) A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

Tozer describes the infinite GAP between God and all of his creatures, even the holiest archangels:

“Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite.”

ii) Isaiah 6

***Isaiah 6:1-4 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." <sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.***

c. God often uses “height” (loftiness) to describe this gap his holiness creates

i) We are humbled and made small in our own eyes by HIGH and LOFTY things that soar above our heads

Illus. the Karakoram Mountains... the Karakoram Highway travelled through the second highest mountain range in the world... took the Khunjerab Pass from Pakistan into China... (15,397 feet high... the highest paved international border crossing in the world, and the highest ground I have ever stood upon)... but the mountains along that highway soared thousands of feet straight up off that road... it made you feel absolutely TINY, insignificant

ii) Biblically speaking, if the mountains, lofty in their grandeur, can make you feel small and insignificant, how much more the loftiness of God’s holy dwelling place...

iii) It soars immeasurably above us, making us feel absolutely tiny, small, insignificant by comparison...

***Isaiah 57:15 this is what the high and lofty One says***

2. God also says he “lives forever and his name is holy”

- a. This is the ETERNALITY of God... God lives unchanged forever and ever
- b. God cannot die... he is immortal

Hebrews 6:18 says it is impossible for God to LIE

This verse says it is impossible for God to DIE

He lives forever!! He reigns forever... his Kingdom will have no end

King Nebuchadnezzar was deeply humbled by God... changed in his mind from a glorious emperor to a lowly beast, eating grass and drenched with the dew every morning for seven years...

***Daniel 4:34-35 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?"***

God's kingdom will never end because he LIVES FOREVER!

- c. His “name is holy”: that means his reputation, earned by his person and his deeds... his name is esteemed and held in honor
- d. Ten Commandments: forbidden to take the name of the Lord in vain
- e. Lord's Prayer: asking God that his name be HALLOWED (held as holy) on earth as it is in heaven
- f. God's holiness is often described in the Bible

***Habakkuk 1:13 Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.***

***1 John 1:5 God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.***

***Exodus 24:15-17 When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, <sup>16</sup> and the glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within***

*the cloud.* <sup>17</sup> *To the Israelites the glory of the LORD looked like a consuming fire on top of the mountain.*

*Hebrews 12:28-29 [Let us] worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, <sup>29</sup> for our "God is a consuming fire."*

3. This is the God of the Bible, the God of the Book of Isaiah, the God who calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light

### C. God Describes His Dwelling Place

*Isaiah 57:15 "I live in a high and holy place*

1. God's dwelling place is as lofty as he is... it is UNREACHABLE by any creature's own efforts or ambitions
  - a. Satan tried to scale the heights and was CAST DOWN...
  - b. Arrogant humans tried to use intelligence and technology to reach heaven and were CAST DOWN
2. It is HIGH and HOLY
  - a. Completely set apart from all creation, PURE, set apart from sin, free from any kind of evil at all
  - b. the New Jerusalem is radiantly glorious, free from all evil

*Revelation 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

3. This is the dwelling place of God

Picture a majestic throne room, with a radiantly glorious throne, with a heavenly courtroom with holy angels all around; picture a perfectly white silk carpet on the floor, and a guardian at the door with a flaming sword flashing back and forth to prevent entry by any deemed unworthy. The place is perfectly clean, free from all defilements

But you... you have spent your days feeding pigs; your clothes stink with the dung of pigs; your face and hands are smeared with mud and filth; the guardian at the door will not allow you entrance. One single step of your muddy boots on that perfectly clean silk carpet would defile it beyond all description. You realize the need for cleanliness. So you reach in your pocket and bring out a rag you use to wipe your sweaty face as you feed the pigs. You begin to wipe your hands and face with the rag, and it is

instantly covered with mud and filth. But you continue to try to clean yourself up.

This is the plight of the human race... we prodigal sons, who have traded our father's inheritance for wicked living... we have come from the pig sty to this perfect throne room... and can we CLEAN OURSELVES UP??

The wonder of the gospel is not that any are refused entry, but that any are ALLOWED AT ALL...

But this is the grace of God in Christ... there actually ARE some people that God wants to spend eternity with... former pig feeders and customers of prostitutes, who drank and celebrated with the Great Whore of Babylon and grievously defiled ourselves... there is a CLEANING BY GRACE that God offers, and a place at his banquet table

#### D. God Describes Those He Allows to Live With Him

***Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.***

1. God will dwell with the sinner who is CONTRITE... broken-hearted, humble, LOWLY IN SPIRIT
2. Not arrogant and lifted up in pride

***Luke 18:9-14 Jesus told this parable: <sup>10</sup> "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' <sup>13</sup> "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' <sup>14</sup> "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."***

3. In Isaiah 57, it is clear that God actually WILL live with sinners... the chapter goes back and forth between the weeds and the wheat... the righteous and the wicked... but it is clearly asserted that even those admitted into the high and holy throne room of God were no different than those rejected... except that they HUMBLER THEMSELVES and sought the grace of God in Christ

Now... having gone straight to the marrow of the bone, the kernel of the nut, and the sweetest part of the chapter, let's see the rest of the chapter verse by

verse in light of that center... in light of a high and holy God who also dwells with contrite and broken sinners

## II. Righteous People Rescued by Death (vs. 1-2)

- A. The Chapter begins with a powerfully important lesson on the death of the righteous

***Isaiah 57:1-2 The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart; devout men are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. <sup>2</sup> Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.***

- B. The Death of the Righteous Easily Misunderstood (vs. 1)

1. The righteous PERISH... by this we mean they die physically
2. BUT when the righteous die, people MISUNDERSTAND... they accuse God of wrongdoing... they weep and grieve often like those who have no hope
3. But Christians should PONDER the death of the righteous in their hearts carefully, based on the theology of the gospel
4. God has promised to defeat death finally, to crush it forever... but NOT YET
5. Christ destroyed death at the cross and empty tomb

***Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.***

6. So the sting of death is REMOVED by faith in Christ

***1 Corinthians 15:54-57 "Death has been swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" <sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. <sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.***

7. This ultimate triumph over death is given as a gift to those who have faith in Christ

***John 11:25-26 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.***

8. Death is the "final enemy" that will be destroyed... but only at the end of the world

***1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.***

C. The Righteous Rescued from Evil by Death (vs. 1-2)

1. God's gracious kindness to Christians is shown in rescuing us from the present evil age and bringing us safely into his heavenly kingdom
2. The text says God rescues the righteous, devout people are taken away to be SPARED FROM EVIL
  - a. The evil of temptations, the WORLD, the FLESH and the DEVIL
  - b. The evil of this present godless age
  - c. The evil of physical pain and torment through cancer, or heart attacks or other diseases that make life so wretched in this world
3. Godly people enter into PEACE, rest in Christ
4. Better... they are in the presence of the Lord

***Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.***

D. Application: Do Not Grieve Like the Hopeless

1. If you should lose a loved one in the Lord to a disease or shocking accident, do not grieve like someone who has no hope

***1 Thessalonians 4:13-14 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.***

2. Grieve, yes... weep as Jesus did at Lazarus's tomb... but don't grieve as if the gospel is not true
3. Your loved one is "ABSENT FROM THE BODY, PRESENT WITH THE LORD"
4. Don't even grieve for yourself... God will sustain you until you are also rescued from this present evil age and enter into peace and rest

Now the text swings back to describe the "weeds" ... those that in part made this present world so evil for believers

**III. Idolatrous People Exposed and Blown Away (57:3-13a)**

A. Mocking Sons of a Prostitute Summoned for Judgment (vs. 3-4)

***Isaiah 57:3-4 "But you-- come here, you sons of a sorceress, you offspring of adulterers and prostitutes! <sup>4</sup> Whom are you mocking? At whom do you sneer and stick out your tongue? Are you not a brood of rebels, the offspring of liars?"***

1. Isaiah is addressing the pagan worship styles even of some Israelites, who worshiped Canaanite gods and goddesses in a pagan fashion
2. He is calling these wicked false worshipers "sons of a sorceress"
3. This is the "whore of Babylon", the evil world system
4. God is a jealous God who desires a holy bride who will love him alone
5. But many Israelites followed the false gods of this present evil age
6. They mock the true worshipers; they stick out their tongues in mockery; they sneer, they attack, they slander, they lie and rebel against God's clear commands
7. They are SUMMONED for judgement by Almighty God

**B. Idolatrous Worship Exposed (vs. 5-13a)**

1. These verses describe the sheer wickedness of the pagan worship practices of those days
2. They included sexual immorality and child sacrifice...
3. They included occultic practices and pagan rituals...
4. These things DEEPLY PROVOKED Almighty God to wrath

***Isaiah 57:5-10 You burn with lust among the oaks and under every spreading tree; you sacrifice your children in the ravines and under the overhanging crags. <sup>6</sup> The idols among the smooth stones of the ravines are your portion; they, they are your lot. Yes, to them you have poured out drink offerings and offered grain offerings. In the light of these things, should I relent? <sup>7</sup> You have made your bed on a high and lofty hill; there you went up to offer your sacrifices. <sup>8</sup> Behind your doors and your doorposts you have put your pagan symbols.***

God speaks as a spiritual HUSBAND deeply offended by the spiritual adultery of his people:

***Forsaking me, you uncovered your bed, you climbed into it and opened it wide; you made a pact with those whose beds you love, and you looked on their nakedness. <sup>9</sup> You went to Molech with olive oil and increased your perfumes. You sent your ambassadors far away; you descended to the grave itself! <sup>10</sup> You***

*were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint.*

5. Amazing that they actually were wearied by all their sins... their practices did not bring them refreshment, but instead wore them out
6. BUT they refused to give them up! They renewed their strength in sin and kept on
7. One key insight even for OUR DAY...

***Isaiah 57:11 Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear me?***

8. People misunderstand the APPARENT SILENCE of God
  - a. Atheists think that because God doesn't speak, doesn't suddenly strike some wicked man dead instantly that he doesn't exist at all

The story is told of the noted atheist, Robert Ingersoll, who delivered one of his speeches attacking the Christian faith. When he was done, he pulled his watch from his pocket and said, "According to the Bible, God has struck men to death for blasphemy. I will blaspheme Him and give Him five minutes to strike me dead and damn my soul."

Many in the crowd gasped at his arrogant statement. Then there was silence as one minute went by. By two minutes, the crowd was growing anxious. At three minutes, a woman fainted. At four minutes, Ingersoll had a prideful triumphant on his face. At five minutes, he snapped his watch shut, put it in his pocket, and said, "You see, there is no God, or He would have taken me at my word."

The story was later told to Joseph Parker, a British pastor, who said, "And did the American gentleman think that he could exhaust the patience of God in five minutes?"

Yet... this is a clear indication of the truth of this verse:

***Isaiah 57:11 Is it not because I have long been silent that you do not fear me?***

- b. Because of the apparent silence of God during the holocaust of WWII, many Jews became atheists, or at least stopped believing in an all-powerful, loving, wise God.

Strongest example of this I ever saw was at the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., a quote by Elie Wiesel, who wrote the following words in his prize-winning book *Night*:

“Blessed be God's name? Why, but why would I bless Him? Every fiber in me rebelled. Because He caused thousands of children to burn in His mass graves? Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and the Holy Days? Because in His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many other factories of death? How could I say to Him: Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnaces? ... But now, I no longer pleaded for anything. I was no longer able to lament. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes had opened and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man.”

In other words, because God was SILENT and apparently DID NOTHING, that meant Elie Wiesel no longer feared him, indeed, no longer believed in him

- c. The hiddenness of God, especially when so much suffering happens in the world is so distressing to many
- d. Honestly the Psalmists wrestled bitterly with God's silence, God's hiddenness, God's absence

***Psalm 28:1 To you I call, O LORD my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit.***

***Psalm 44:23-24 Awake, O Lord! Why do you sleep? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever. <sup>24</sup> Why do you hide your face and forget our misery and oppression?***

- e. Here God speaks through the prophet and addresses this issue directly... because I am silent, you don't FEAR ME!
- f. But someday I will speak plainly, and there is no doubt you will hear me
- g. In the meantime, this is what you have... this is how God speaks:

***Luke 16:29 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'***

C. Idolatrous Worshipers Blown Away with their Idols (vs. 11-13a)

- 1. So what is the end of these wicked, idolatrous worshipers?

***Isaiah 57:12-13 I will expose your righteousness and your works, and they will not benefit you. <sup>13</sup> When you cry out for help, let your collection of idols save you! The wind will carry all of them off, a mere breath will blow them away.***

- 2. These idolaters will be blown away like chaff from the threshing floor
- 3. Relying on their idols, they will perish

YET... right in the middle of verse 13, we switch back to the godly

***Isaiah 57:13 But the man who makes me his refuge will inherit the land and possess my holy mountain."***

#### IV. God Dwells with Humbled and Healed Sinners (57:13b-19)

##### A. The Humble and Contrite Welcome to Dwell with God (vs. 13b-15)

1. God addresses the man who humbles himself and makes God his true refuge
2. He will not be blown away like chaff, but will reside in God, like a mighty tower
3. He will INHERIT THE LAND and possess God's holy mountain...
4. More than that, he will be instrumental in leading others to faith in God

***Isaiah 57:14-15 And it will be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people." <sup>15</sup> For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.***

The road is the way by which lowly, brokenhearted sinners find refuge in God

Their spirits are REVIVED by God, RENEWED for the journey toward heaven

This is the road that leads to LIFE...

***John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***

##### B. God's Judgment on Contrite Sinners Heals Them (vs. 16-19)

1. What's most amazing about those God welcomes sinners... people who deserve his wrath... they are lowly and contrite in spirit because they realize how sinful they have been
2. The ones God spends eternity with in his HIGH AND HOLY place are corrupted and defiled sinners who realized it in time and found forgiveness in Christ
3. The text shows how ANGRY God was with them in their sin... and how powerfully he has HEALED THEM and cleansed them

***Isaiah 57:16-19 I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me-- the breath of man that I have created. <sup>17</sup> I***

*was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. <sup>18</sup> I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, <sup>19</sup> creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them."*

4. God's careful record of their sins was cast out... the written code of his law stood against them
5. God nailed it to the cross of Christ

***Colossians 2:13-14*** *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, <sup>14</sup> having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.*

- a. They were idolaters too... God says he was ENRAGED by their sinful greed
  - b. And greed is idolatry
  - c. Not only that, these sinners were WILLFUL... they went on in their sins for a long time after they were first convicted and accused... they hardened their hearts
6. God HEALED them of their wayward ways...

***Isaiah 53:5-6*** *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. <sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

7. Jesus spoke plainly of this spiritual healing

***Luke 5:30-32*** *the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" <sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

8. So also in our text:

***Isaiah 57:18-19*** *I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, <sup>19</sup> creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD. "And I will heal them."*

- C. The Result: Eternal Peace and Timeless Praise

1. The beauty of this amazing gospel: the peace it creates for former sinners

***John 20:19-20*** *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"<sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

***Romans 5:1*** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*

- a. This is a STATUS of peace between God and his former enemies
  - b. It also results in an experience of PEACEFULNESS in our hearts... of feeling now at peace with everything in God's world because God has loved us in Christ
2. And notice how this peace is given to those near and those far away

***Isaiah 57:19*** *... creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near," says the LORD*

3. This is reasonably a prophecy of Gentile salvation in Christ

***Ephesians 2:12-14*** *remember [GENTILES] that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace*

4. God's final promise: AND I WILL HEAL THEM...
  - a. Healed of all our wayward ways
  - b. God gives his peace to those he also determines to heal
  - c. He does not give peace to people who remain living in their rebellion
  - d. The spiritual healing from sin goes hand in hand with the peace God gives in Christ

But... what a contrast with the wicked

## V. God Condemns the Wicked to Endless Restlessness (57:20-21)

### A. The Wicked Endlessly Restless (vs. 20)

***Isaiah 57:20-21 But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. <sup>21</sup> "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."***

1. The wicked are churning, restless, never satisfied, never at rest
2. They are like SATAN who is continually roaming throughout the world looking for trouble
3. They are like the demons of Matthew 12 who go through arid places seeking rest and never find it
4. The restlessness of the world of sinners is so obvious... the wicked world of people is seen like a turbulent sea

Daniel 7 pictures the world of men like a SEA out of which come these great beasts

So also Revelation 13 uses the same image... a restless turbulent sea out of which comes the beast, the antichrist

- a. Think about all the political unrest in the world... the riots and demonstrations and violence
  - b. Think about the restlessness of the Muslim world, leading many young Muslims to seek an outlet for their rage in jihad and terrorism
  - c. Think about the constant turmoil of nation rising against nation in warfare... wars never cease
  - d. Think about the simple restlessness of the world as seen in the nightly news report on CNN... how there is NO PEACE for the wicked
  - e. They are like the CHURNING SEA, CASTING UP MIRE AND MUCK... they are constantly seething, constantly angry, constantly seeking SOMETHING worthwhile... ambitious but never satisfied
5. Think about the restless hearts of people who are addicted to prescription pain relievers and can never get enough... they get their peace from the narcotic
    - a. Stunning levels of people now addicted to these opioids
    - b. Also to heroin and morphine
    - c. This is a serious global problem: as many as 36 million people worldwide addicted
    - d. They are looking for PEACE

- e. Other people are restlessly looking for escape through alcohol... drowning their sorrows by the bottle
- 6. Think about the restless people who look for peace through psychiatry and counseling... an estimated 615 million people suffer from anxiety or depression... many of them are literally restless: they suffer from chronic insomnia... they are filled with anxiety and go to psychiatrists and psychologists and can get NO PEACE
- 7. Think about the relentless drive and ambition of even successful, wealthy people... people who GET their dream job, their dream life, and are deeply dissatisfied with it

Tom Brady, New England Patriots quarterback, in an interview with 60 minutes journalist Steve Kroft said these stunning words:

**BRADY:** A lot of times I think I get very frustrated and introverted, and there's times where I'm not the person that I want to be.

Why do I have three Super Bowl rings, and still think there's something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, "Hey man, this is what is." I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think: God, it's gotta be more than this. I mean this can't be what it's all cracked up to be. I mean I've done it. I'm 27. And what else is there for me?

**KROFT:** What's the answer?

**BRADY:** I wish I knew. I wish I knew.

Tom Brady, as successful as you could ever wish to be as an athlete and a man—rich, famous, good looking, beloved, married to a supermodel, a champion at that point three times over... saying "There's gotta be more than this. I wish I knew... I wish I knew."

How many other restless people are roaming the surface of the earth trying to find something that will bring them peace

- 8. Few verses capture the reason for the world's misery than this one:

**Isaiah 57:20-21** *But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.* <sup>21</sup> "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

B. That Last Verse in the Chapter reads like a decree

- 1. If someone is wicked, they will never know peace

2. They might be PACIFIED (like a man in a drunken stupor), but they will never know the full, rich, sweet peace that Christians know, who have found their sins forgiven, covered by the blood of Christ
3. And if they die in that state, for eternity they will be turbulent, filled with anguish and bitter regrets

## VI. An Invitation from the High and Holy

A. Let's Return to the majestic verse 15 and read it as an invitation

***Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.***

1. If you are one of those RESTLESS people I was just describing, and you know that you entered this place outside of Christ this morning, I want to invite you to accept God's invitation
2. He has described himself: the HIGH and LOFTY ONE, the one who LIVES FOREVER, and whose name is HOLY
3. He has described his eternal dwelling place: "I LIVE IN A HIGH AND HOLY PLACE..."
4. You can never enter that place as a wicked person... but God has described who he is delighted to live with: the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, whom God has HEALED of sin

***Isaiah 57:18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him,***

God has promised to drop all his accusation and his anger:

***Isaiah 57:16 I will not accuse forever, nor will I always be angry,***

5. The New Testament makes it plain: only by faith in Christ will all this happen!

***Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."***

B. For Christians

1. Meditate deeply on the lessons of Isaiah 57:1-2...

***Isaiah 57:1-2 the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. <sup>2</sup> Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death.***

- a. The deaths of Christians are to be expected
  - b. We should understand God has blessed them with great joy and peace in his presence
  - c. We should not grieve like the rest of the world that has no hope
2. See if there is a restlessness in you like the wicked
    - a. Don't restlessly surf the web or look for happiness in worldly pursuits
    - b. Don't imitate the world in seeking peace from alcohol or medications or successes or possessions or vacations or trips
    - c. Find peace in Christ and in the promise of an eternal home in glory with God
  3. Meditate much on the staggering words of verse 15... the way God describes himself and his heavenly dwelling place... LOVE HOLINESS... SEEK THE BEAUTY of holiness... delight in it!
  4. Understand the turmoil of the world is caused because they are restlessly seeking fulfillment in sin and will never know peace... see the events on CNN through the eyes of verses 20-21... "the wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and muck..." Feel the power of God's decree: "There is no peace for the wicked..." and SHARE THE GOSPEL with a lost coworker or relative or stranger ... pray for MISSIONS... the effort to take Christ to the lost of the world