

Prof Donald Macleod: Isaiah 57:15

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Preacher: Guest Preacher

[0 : 00] Let's return to that chapter of red and Isaiah, chapter 57 and the words of verse 15.

Well, that says that one who is highlighted up in happens eternity, whose name is holy, idwell in the high and holy place, but also with him was of a confidant and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

The Bible of all of us knows a revelation of God in his glory and majesty. In fact, it's God's self-regulation, God's self-disclosure, for he tells us about himself and shares with us something of his own knowledge of the depths of his own being.

More than we can ourselves assimilate or understand, but nothing like what he himself knows of his own majesty and his own divinity.

But through that revelation there runs one dominant theme, and that is the glory and greatness of God himself.

[1 : 44] And I want for a moment today to reflect with you on that greatness as these words set it forth for us.

He speaks first to us of the Amazon holiness, the one who is high and lifted up, whose name in fact is holy.

Not only is it a holy name, which he has of course, but his name is holy. If you ask him who are you and what is your name, then his name is, his responses, my name is holy, that's who I am, I am holy.

A reminder to us of the mysteriousness at one level of God's being, far beyond our comprehension of God is the depths of this nature which is so unlike your own because no one gave him being.

And in God's being there is no development, there is no growth, there is no weirdness, no indolent of energy, and there is God to a curse in his existence as a triune God, as Father, Son and Spirit.

[3 : 20] And so he stayed before us in his mysteriousness as the unbegun one, as a triune one, as the one whose mode of being is so far beyond our comprehension.

This God who is awesome in his power, in his judgments and justice, this God who is so fascinating, so beautiful in his love, this God of absolute and utter integrity, his name is holy, all those elements part of that otherness of God.

And then he says as to us as well, he's the one who is high and lifted up, he is the one who is lofty.

This idea of a space, an immense space between us and God. On a matter of course we get to God, that space is always there.

We sometimes think, in our generation, of living forms as a continuous chain of being, from a sponge through the higher animals as we call them, and then on to the human race.

[4 : 57] And between all these species only there are very small gradations, small, small steps. And then at last this final step between man and God, just one other small, small step.

And yet it's never that. It's a gigantic step into a greater and very different mode of being, this great creator, creature divide that's always there.

And so this august eminence, this lofty one, this mysterious holy God, we are always looking up to him.

And that's how it will always be, like someone looking up at some great mountain peak, more blobs or perhaps looking up towards the Mount Everest peak.

And of course it disappears in the mist far beyond our vision. And so always with God, our only posture is and can be that we are looking up.

[6 : 19] That's how it is this morning, looking up to this great lofty eminence that stands over us in worship.

And even for a Lord himself, God's son in our nature, for him too in his humanity that divide in grandeur of his father is again a lofty eminence to be looked up to God in his greatness, God in his glory.

And so I say before us here, as the one whose name is holy and the one who is always lofty above us, when we in the grace of God reach our own final destiny and have hugely enlarged and glorified intellects, even then he will be an eminence, a lofty and unfathomable inexhaustible eminence.

And part of the wonder of it is that at the same time the Bible tells us, the we shall see face to face.

We'll see the lofty one face to face, we'll see the mountain face to face, we'll see God in his glory face to face.

[7 : 51] And it always with his sense of reverence, of the otherness, of the awesomeness, of the beauty of God, we fall at his feet as dead.

And so he is here before us, as the one whose name is holy and before us two as this lofty eminence in all his glory.

And then there arises the question, well where does he dwell? This, where does a holy, where does a holy dwell?

And where does this high and lofty one, where does he dwell? And we're told first of all that he dwells, or he inhabits eternity.

He fills the whole of time, every single moment of our time, he is present in it, and he's present to it, as the one who is and was and will be.

[9 : 04] We move away from our past, we move into our future, we leave behind our move to words, but God doesn't do that, God dwells in the whole of time.

There's for him no date of birth, and no date of progress. Our greater Gaelic poet, Ulema Khan, said I think once, Charoa au Kishin Chavi, he was never young, and he'll never be old, he is simply eternal one, and the being one, from all change and all mutation free.

Every time I come back to my homeland, I'm conscious of change, and I'll decay, not least in myself.

And yet he is the same, the landscape changes, the coastline changes, those I see change, I change, but he is the same, in the constancy of wholeness, power, competence, love unchanging, caring and changing, he inhabits eternity.

And yet this eternity, it wasn't there before him. It's not something that contains God, into which God stepped, within which God is confined, in which God lives.

[11 : 02] He dwells in himself, because he is infinite, and that's where he lives, where do you live, where does holy live, what's his dwelling place, he dwells in himself, filling all of time there before it, not after it because there's no after time anyway, but there before it, or how long before it, a billion trillion years, trillion trillion years, no, an infinitude, if one can speak of before time.

So he fills it, but it doesn't contain him, or define him, or anyway set boundaries for him, so he inhabits eternity in wholeness in himself.

And it's not also true that he fills all space, fills all time, and fills all space.

And how remarkable it is, although one can see and grasp so little of it, because for all practical purposes, this space itself is infinite, because our universe is expanding at a phenomenal rate with every passing moment, and God is present everywhere within this universe, most we can see with a naked eye, but what no satellite sees, and no telescope sees, God is there.

If we make, Carlyway, a reference point, uncalculate those millions and billions of light years away from us in that vastness of space, and it seems empty to us, and God's at every point there, he said caring, and they are upholding, and they are governing.

[13 : 43] The stars collapse and clash, as atoms spin and whirl. God is there at every single point in space preserving governing, otherwise it would fall in upon itself and crush itself to extinction, or fall apart as its bits flew, billions of miles from each other, but he fills it, and he's there, and yet again.

How big is God? As big as space. Is God millions of light years wide, or trillions?

And if space has a boundary, then is that God's boundary. I'm saying again, no, God fills it, but that space doesn't confine God, but he is high and lofty.

There's a space between him and time, and a space between him and space, always, always a space between God and what is not God.

And just as time can't confine and define him or bound him, and a space can't bound and define him, so can our own minds, our own words, our own concepts, our own images of God.

[15 : 25] We have, of course, the word of God to guide us what to say, and we say things, and we have our words about God.

And yet always we know that when we speak about God, about any aspect of perfection of God, we have said so, so very, very little, we never have them under a verbal control.

Our sentences, our sermons, our prayers, our tombs of theology, they leave so, so much unsaid. All the words you want to go to home can't exhaust God or confine him.

You can't say, he's in that library. You'll find, oh, it has to be known in that library. You can't find him and recede some confessions and say, oh, they tell, they tell it all.

They've got, they set the boundaries, they define God. Supposing, are you the hall of my Bible? Are the meaning of every verse in my Bible?

[16 : 39] Are the import of every word in my Bible, I will still not have searched out the Almighty unto perfection, or have said boundaries to his being or to his glory.

And it's not for me discouraging, because you know what it says to me is this, I have my own little way and so are we all infinite time.

We sometimes say time is short, the Bible itself says it. And yet on another level, you have so much on it, not on this side of death, but on that side beyond, which some call the great unknown, that born from which no traveler returns.

But it's not unknown, because it's our home and where Christ is, and where God's grace guiding us and taking us home, we shall spend by far the vast proportion of our existence.

And we shall there be getting to know him, the lofty one looking up at the mountain, looking up with the angels, and the spirits are just men made perfect, looking up.

[18 : 16] And every day in that glory to come, in that infinite time, that never runs out in that time getting to know.

And then you might say, perhaps, will a point come when we say to ourselves, and we're at the end of our course, it's mid-semester yet, the turn and break, the vacation, when do we come to the end, will this ever be over, this magnificent experience of mind and heart and imagination, also meditated in the glory of God.

Is it good to end? And the great answer, no. When I've been there 10,000 years bright, shining as a sun, there's no less time to see God's praise than when I first began.

The wonder that almost overwhelms us at the moment is this, that this God who was this whole eternity which to live, should come into my time.

All this space to manage comes into my space. How can it be that the manager of this immeasurable cosmos, whose duration can't be measured, whose extent can't be measured, how can he hear me when I cry from some pit of near despair, anguish and incomprehension, can he hear me for the whole universe?

[20 : 18] It's making so, so many sounds. And so, there he is, where does he live? He inhabits eternity.

Where does he live? He inhabits space and fills it in all his boundlessness.

Where does he live? In my thoughts and concepts and words about him. But neither eternity nor space, nor our thoughts, but fine or mind him.

They reach out to him, they apprehend, but they never comprehend. You cannot draw a circle around God. You can make contact with aspects of him.

And you've been in mind, every aspect that you touch. This itself an infinitude. I touch his love.

[21 : 24] And you think, well, that's only a bit of him. And yet in a way it's the whole of him. And it's more than heart or imagination can cope with.

And I make contact with his power. And I feel again, it's only a bit of him. And I say, no, all of him is in his power.

And it's beyond my comprehension. So he dwells in eternity, and dwells in space, and dwells in our thoughts and words and concepts.

But then, of course, a great message of this whole passage. And also, we're told here, and our magnificentities.

And also, but also, I inhabit eternity. And I also dwell, I also dwell with the one who is of a contrite and lorry spirit.

[22 : 30] And how magnificent is that? Where does he dwell? He fills space, he fills time.

And he dwells with those who are lorry and contrite. What is he saying to us?

He dwells with those who are crushed. The bruised reed and the smoking flax.

With those who are scarcely coping, with those who aren't coping, with those. The fearful pit and the mighty clay.

With those who walk in darkness and have no light, with the crushed.

[23 : 29] Not with self-sufficient, and the aspirational, and the confident of all the crush, and of all synone moments such as these.

But with those who are bruised by life, and crushed by life, and hardly coping with life, that's where he dwells this morning.

With those who are saying that they're close to the end of their endurance, perhaps.

The crushed ones, they turn to him, and they cry from the depths to him. And he hears them, and he comes, and he dwells there with them.

And he dwells with a penitent. With those who have been led by God on that terrible journey into self-knowledge.

[24 : 45] To whom God has shown themselves. And who in that self-knowledge come to him in the confession of the Lord's sin.

And who hide nothing, because they know that they cannot hide. There's a great work on the Lord's supper by a theologian called Romer Bruce of the late 16th century in St Giles in Edinburgh.

And in his sermons on the supper he says one point, let no one come to the table unless he's like a woman who washed the Savior's feet with the tears of a contrite heart.

And that's how we come, not with a head held high but the tears of a contrite heart.

How we have fallen short of our own standards, of the law standards.

[26 : 07] And how we have hurt our Savior. We come with the tears of a contrite heart.

We come as those whose only hope is in the forgiveness and compassion of God.

That marvelous word in 1 John, if we confess our sins. That promise. And in all I sometimes wonder, is it anything in the whole world of God more difficult to believe than that promise?

Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more. How hard is that?

Can God forget? Does he never bring them back? Well someone does. But does he? Eyes says have blotted out a like a thick cloud of transgressions.

[27 : 33] I've done it. And those who are contrite and lowly, that's their confidence. Not even the tears with which they wipe their Savior's feet. But the sovereign clemency of God on the basis of a Savior's obedience and blood, is that their confidence.

Or the lowly. The one who knows his place or who knows her place at the very bottom.

And is content to know himself as such to take that place. In the solemn words of the Apostle Paul, less than the least of all sins.

Leaster than the leastest of all sins, right right down there. Not only the words of public prayer and public testimony, but in the depths of our own souls, so to ourselves.

As never to lament, when we don't get our place because we have no place.

[29 : 09] Except the one that matters that we are sons and daughters of the living God. Part of a family in which all are equal.

In which they almost compete to be leastest of the leastest. The lowly in heart.

I dwell there he says. Whether it is this sense of being crushed.

Whether it is this penitence over the wrong sins. That's where God dwells.

Oh, but I thought he said he dwells in eternity. How can you put this? How can you put holy?

[30 : 13] How can you put him in my heart? Well, I can't, but he comes and how much of him. All of him.

All his attributes. His love and grace and power. His omniscience. They're all there.

And beyond that, yes, the Father is there. And the Son is there. And the Holy Spirit is there. And I was asking, well, how can you walk out of the church with so much inside you?

With all the glory of God. Each divine person dwelling within us there. With those who are humble, lowly and contrite.

And yet it's the truth. Christ lives in us. The Holy Spirit walks with us side by side with us every step of the way.

[31 : 26] And God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit, they have all taken up permanent residence in your hearts. The lowly and the contrite.

The white as God, dude, you see again the glory of this word of God. Why does he come to dwell? Why does he come to dwell in your heart of all the places in this incredibly vast universe? How come he has landed here in my heart?

Well, you see the words of the prophet at the end of the verse there. To revive the spirit of the lowly. And to revive the heart of the contrite. To revive us.

And isn't that what we need in the name of God to be revived? We have lost our energy.

We feel soullessness, we feel sometimes so helpless, so devoid of life.

[32 : 53] But he comes, and he comes to revive, to revive the spirit, the heart of the lowly and the heart of the contrite.

To be to that point where once again we say to ourselves, for me, living is Christ. I don't have a life and then Christ.

I have Christ. That's my life. To magnify him. And to experience every blessing that I can find in him and find in him alone. And I want them all. I want to magnify him.

And I want all he has to give because for me, living is Christ. Those who had waited the Lord should renew their strength.

But only will he himself comes and takes up precedence in her heart and her spirit. And when that happens, then we shall bond up with wings like eagles. We shall run and not be weary.

[34 : 23] We shall walk and not faint. Have you any idea what God's plans are for tomorrow? What's in his diary? What engagements he has for tomorrow?

I'm very sure, and it all says because I'm here, but I'm sure that Carlyway is in his diary.

And this place which in many ways is very grand, in some ways is very lowly. But he has a doubt to be here.

And because he's here, since we gather in his name, they does come with lowly and contrite hearts.

May we not come or be deterred from coming because we are not what we know we should be. Where, how did we ever get to the point when we thought that the Lord's suffer was for people who felt good about themselves?

[35 : 49] That's not what God wells with people who feel good about themselves.

But he'll be here tomorrow with us and don't feel good about themselves. And with us collectively to revive us, to inspire us, to drive us forward with boundless energy living to the glory of our Savior.

May our prayers be answered. Let's call him his name.