

Tuesday, February 12

Isaiah 58:1-12

Fasting that pleases God

Fasting - a normal religious practice, a common thing for Jews, Muslims and Christians, a natural part of Torah, Gospel, and Qur'an. I even suggested Sunday that we all fast during Lent - 1 meal a day once a week, 2 meals a day once a week, maybe 3.

It seems Isaiah is not impressed with any fast:

You fast, but at the same time you bicker and fight.

You fast, but you swing a mean fist.

The kind of fasting you do
won't get your prayers off the ground.

Do you think this is the kind of fast day I'm after:
a day to show off humility?

To put on a pious long face
and parade around solemnly in black?

Do you call that fasting,

a fast day that I, God, would like? *"Scripture taken from The Message. Copyright ? 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group." biblegateway.com/versions/?action=getVersionInfo&vid=65*

Isaiah opposes fasting - meant to manipulate God:

To all appearances they're a nation of right-living people—
law-abiding, God-honoring.

They ask me, 'What's the right thing to do?'
and love having me on their side.

But they also complain,

'Why do we fast and you don't look our way?

Why do we humble ourselves and you don't even notice?'

And Isaiah's quite clear who needs to be 'manipulated' -

not God, but us." This is the kind of fast day I'm after:

to break the chains of injustice,
get rid of exploitation in the workplace,
free the oppressed,
cancel debts.

share your food with the hungry,
invite the homeless poor into your homes,
put clothes on the shivering ill-clad,
be available to your own families

get rid of unfair practices,
quit blaming victims,
quit gossiping about other people's sins,

the hungry

be generous with

give yourselves to the down-and-out,

Ouch! Now God's into 'meddlin' - in our family, in our business, in our church, in our neighborhood.

Do this and the lights will turn on,
and your lives will turn around at once.
Your lives will begin to glow in the darkness,
your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight.
You'll be like a well-watered garden,
a gurgling spring that never runs dry.
You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew,
rebuild the foundations from out of your past.
You'll be known as those who can fix anything,
restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate,
make the community livable again.

A Way to Pray – Fast

- ✓ Let yourself feel hungry – what do I want?
- ✓ Let yourself feel empty – what would fill me?
- ✓ Let yourself taste God – what does God give me?