

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
August 9, 2015**

**Isaiah 5:8-17**

**Eight Deadly Sins: OVERINDULGENCE**

**Hymns: 224 – 452 – 462  
Closing: *Thy Holy Wings, O Savior***

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Every day, the father went off to work before his children rose from bed. They really had no idea what he was doing, but the father certainly had a plan. In love, he wanted their lives to be filled with blessings; he wanted to give them a place that they were happy to call home; he wanted to secure their future. Although it took a long time, eventually he was able to give them what he had hoped.

Yet, there was no happily ever after. Though the children certainly enjoyed the blessings, they also became consumed by the excess. Mouths that were always ready to ask for more never opened to offer their thanks. Time after time, they put those future plans in harm's way. The father, too, became frustrated at what he saw. And though there was patient instruction; and there were warnings and threats; none of it slowed the destructive over-indulgence of the children.

So, finally, the father acted. The blessings were taken away; the hand that fed was cut off; the children were told it was time to move out. The father didn't want it be this way, but what other options were left? The lesson had to be learned.

It was at that final point in the relationship that we find ourselves in Isaiah 5. God the Father had done so much for the children of Israel over the years. From Abraham's nomadic life to Jacob fleeing from his brother Esau to slavery in Egypt and an exodus through the desert, God had carried out a plan that had brought his children to the Promised Land full of blessings. God had shaped the nation, gave them success and showered them with blessings that reached the peak under the rule of King David.

However, in the years following David, the nation of Israel became a land of excess. Fueled by the prosperity that David's victorious conquests had brought to them, God's chosen people had been given access to the best of what the world had to offer.

Beginning with David's son Solomon, there was a widespread overindulgence on what God had intended to be blessings for his people.

It was supposed to be the land flowing with milk and honey, but instead it had turned into the land flowing with wine and drunkenness. The air was to be filled with songs of praises to God, but it was the soundtrack of parties that the instruments rang out. They were the people that were to be consumed by zeal for their God, but it was pagan idolatry that overflowed from their hearts into their lives.

God had tried to curb their actions during the period of the Judges; he had given them instruction and warning through the words of the prophets; he had tried to guide them through the rule of kings; but nothing had worked in bringing his people to change their overindulgent, sinful ways. So now God would act in a way that could not be ignored. And he proclaimed that work through Isaiah.

***<sup>8</sup>Woe to you who add house to house and join field to field till no space is left and you live alone in the land.***

***<sup>9</sup>The LORD Almighty has declared in my hearing:***

***"Surely the great houses will become desolate, the fine mansions left without occupants. <sup>10</sup>A ten-acre vineyard will produce only a bath of wine, a homer of seed only an ephah of grain.***

***<sup>11</sup>Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.***

***<sup>12</sup>They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands.***

***<sup>13</sup>Therefore my people will go into exile for lack of understanding; their men or rank will die of hunger and their masses will be parched with thirst.***

***<sup>14</sup>Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers.***

***<sup>15</sup>So man will be brought low and mankind humbled, the eyes of the arrogant humbled.***

***<sup>16</sup>But the LORD Almighty will be exalted by his justice, and the holy God will show himself holy by his righteousness.***

***<sup>17</sup>Then sheep will graze as in their own pasture; lambs will feed among the ruins of the rich.***

God had to show his people that this life of overindulgence was not just a harmless enjoyment of an embarrassment of riches. This was a sin that would be punished; this was a sin that could be deadly.

As the people of Israel had spent so many years opening their hearts and their mouths and their arms

while crying out, “More,” God declared through these verses that the punishment for their sins would be just as consuming if they did not repent and change how they lived.

It would begin with the woe and despair that would come as the excess that these people enjoyed and focused their lives on would dwindle to nothing. The houses, the property, the food, the drinks, everything that fed this excessive lifestyle, would be taken away so that there would be nothing to imbibe upon.

And then there would be exile. God would allow his people to be taken from the very land that he had once done so much to give to them.

Finally, there would be death. Those who filled their lives with overindulgence, God declared that ***“the grave would enlarge its appetite for them and open its mouth without limit.”***

This would be the way that God would show his people that their overindulgence was a serious offense.

As the years have passed, it’s amazing how little the details change, isn’t it? As we look at Isaiah’s words, it isn’t overly difficult to see a description of the overindulgence that fill so many lives today. Homes, property, food, alcohol, entertainment; the vices of overindulgence remain very much the same.

And it remains just as easy to excuse the excess as well. “It’s part of our culture,” we say as we prepare to devote fall Sundays to football/fandom. “Only one night a week”; “I’ve got to eat,” as we run up the calories and the bill as we eat out once again. “We need it to function,” we reason as we purchase another new phone. “I’ve got to fit in at work” is the excuse as we upgrade the wardrobe, or the car, or the house. “God wants us to enjoy the blessings,” we reason.

Therein lies the difficulty and danger as we talk about excess and overindulgence. God wanted his children to have blessings and to enjoy life as he brought them into the land of Israel and gave them victory and the spoils that came with it. He still wants the same for us. But, how much is too much? That is a difficult question to answer.

But through his words, Isaiah shows us that the line can be crossed. In his words for his people, God does not condemn the enjoyment of blessings, but look what he ID’s as problems. In verse 8, he decries the obsession with adding more. Verse 11, he condemns the drunkenness and sickness that comes from overindulgence. Verse 12, he points to the thanklessness for what they have, and the pride that fuels that search for more. And verse 13, he lists a lack of understanding as to why God gives blessings. When God looked at his people, he saw the line being crossed. He saw the attitudes that led to over-

indulgence. He saw the problems that resulted from excess.

So, what would God see in our lives if he were evaluating the way in which we use his blessings?

- As we live by his grace in a land of freedom, would he decry the way we abuse that freedom to indulge in whatever sin makes us feel good.
- As he fills our lives with blessings given to carry out his will, would he condemn how often we forget his work as we focus on adding more?
- Would he point to all which he gives to enjoy in moderation which we so often consume like gluttons?

As we use his blessings to our bodily harm; as we accumulate his blessings and then look for more; as we allow our pursuit of enjoyment to keep us from him and his Word; our lives are proof that our indulgence is often excessive.

And Isaiah reminds us that the sin of overindulgence is significant. As God brought about woe and exile and death for the overindulgent people of Israel, let us never think that the excess that we share with the Israelites deserves a different punishment. God’s words through Isaiah are there as a vivid warning for us. They are also a plea to go a different way than so many in Israel went. After Isaiah delivered these words of woe and coming destruction, he declared to God’s people that there was another way.

He pointed them to a Savior who would come to this earth sent from the throne of God. And rather than indulging in all the glories and luxuries that often belong to royalty, this King would live in humility and fill his life with suffering and death. He would do that, not so that the lives of God’s people would be filled with the excess of worldly pleasure, but that their lives might be filled with something much better. He wanted their lives to be full of forgiveness for all of their failings; he wanted their lives to be full of God’s love and mercy; he wanted their lives to be filled for eternity.

Finding that fullness of God’s blessings meant letting go of that overindulgence, repenting of it, and finding their fullness in God.

Isaiah points us to that same Savior, Jesus Christ. He leads us to that work in which Jesus gave up everything so that we might have full forgiveness from our Father. He urges us to that change of heart and life that comes with repentance. He encourages us to fill our hearts with a desire for doing our Father’s work.

Those who give up gorging themselves with the consumption of earthly pleasures are given promises in place of woe. They find the fullness of what God

offers through his Son. They find the blessings that the Father planned for his children: a land flowing with the sweet milk and honey of forgiveness; a home prepared magnificently by the Savior; a future filled with the eternal glory and joy that comes from being at our Father's side. May we set our hearts on the fullness of what God has to offer. Amen.