

## Promises Kept – Isaiah 41:8-10

How's everyone's 2021 going so far? Anyone want to cancel their 10-day trial?

Maybe, but I don't think anyone wants to go back to 2020 either! Now what?

How do we move forward? How do we be the Church right here, right now?

One of the hardest parts of my job is discerning what needs to be preached, so that our church family can be equipped to face the challenges of our day!

The original plan to start off 2021 was to preach about who we are as BRC!  
Worship (inward), Discipleship (upward), Ministry/Service/Evan. (outward)

Then I considered preaching about loss – for 2020 has brought about loss for all of us in one way or another – life, freedoms, routine, identity, etc.

Then I considered extending the Advent series to carry over the joy of Christmas into the new year – keeping things positive in the midst of so much negativity!

But none of these options sat well with me, so I prayed that God would show me what needed to be proclaimed, so that we as a church might be equipped & ready to face the year ahead, no matter what it brings!

The word that kept coming to mind as I prayed was the word “promise”!

- The promise of a new reality for a new year? (the P.F. wacky wavers)
- The promise of better days & a “Better America” with a new president, a new administration, and a new political direction?
- The promise of positive thinking? 1/3 less likely to have a heart attack!
- The promise of an 11-5 Browns team being a legit Super Bowl contender?

None of these options feel like real promises to take into 2021, because they aren't promises! There's no certainty that any of them can/will be kept?

It's kind of like watching that mortgage commercial w/ Bernie Kosar saying, “Don't fumble it” & “Promises kept”, and then remembering Jan. 1987/88!

Promises are only as reliable as the one making the promise! There is truly only one being that can say with absolute certainty that the promises made are promises kept and that is God!

And thankfully, God has made such promises, & they are reliable. And no matter what year it is, we can take His promises into the new year with us!

The Bible is filled with such promises, but I have chosen the book of Isaiah as the place we will turn for the next 6 weeks to hear His promises & watch them unfold in the lives of His people as well as seek their fulfillment in our lives too!

The book of Isaiah is one of many prophetic books in the Bible, but it is unique in the sense that it has been called a “Bible in miniature”. See slide

The book of Isaiah is also unique in that it gives the perspective of what's about to happen, what God will do and how He will respond to His people when it happens, and finally what God will do after it happens in the future!

These are the kinds of promises our God gives to His people (us included), and they are exactly what we need to hear & cling to in 2021.

God's promises are 3-fold:

- 1) He speaks the truth about us – our sin and the consequences of it! – a divided kingdom, external threats, internal threats, destruction
- 2) Even in the midst of those consequences, God is present, He is with His people, & He will deliver His people b/c of His promise - even if exiled, removed from Jerusalem, the Temple destroyed, the people scattered!
- 3) There is a salvation & a future hope that is eternal because of God's ultimate promise of the coming of a Savior – both His 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> coming!

This sermon series will not be just warm & fuzzy statements from God void of the context in which they were given! I'm not interested in just feel-good messages, absent of the realities that God's people face – yesterday & today!

But you will hear how God has established a very special relationship with us, how we have a very unique history, how God is amazing closeness to us, & how God intends this relationship to be about His glory & His purpose in this world!

**“But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, & called from the farthest corners, saying to you ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you & not cast you off’”** – This is who we are as descendants of Abraham!

& here is His promise - **“fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you w/ my righteous right hand.”** I don't know about you, but I need to hear that today!

No matter where we are, who/what is against us, even if we have turned away, & gone our own way, God is still our God & He is with us - **He made a promise!**

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The word that kept coming to mind as I prayed was the word “\_\_\_\_\_”!

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God's promises are 3-fold:

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