

SIXTIETH CHAPTER OF ISAIAH

A SERMON

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“They shall bring gold, and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord.” Isaiah 60:6

THIS chapter must be understood spiritually, and that from first to last, that it does not refer to any supposed state of the church to come on earth, called by some the Millennium, but that this chapter is a representation to us of the Christian dispensation. Hence, it is true, it is highly figurative; but then this is only in keeping with all the ancient languages, which languages were highly figurative. Indeed, an English writer has shown that even every English word had its archetype, that is to say, that every word in our language is figurative, only we have lost the figures; we have lost the things from which the words were taken. So that this writer holds that there are no words which are not figurative. But here, in the Scriptures, you have the figures themselves represented. So, this chapter must be understood spiritually. You will at once perceive the absurdity of understanding it in any other way. For instance, it is said, in this chapter, “The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto you.” Why, you will not take that literally, it would be ridiculous; you will take it spiritually, just the same as you do the dear Savior's parable of the net being cast into the sea, the same thing. And then you read also here, “The multitude of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah.” These camels and dromedaries are nothing else but sinners, as shown in Peter's vision; and that they undergo, by the grace of God, a transformation. We must understand this also, I say, spiritually. And hence these same creatures, when they undergo this transformation, are to bring gold and incense, and show forth the praises of the Lord. Also, you read of flocks of sheep here coming up acceptably on the Lord's altar; that is, the people of God offered up as sacrifices to God by Christ Jesus, as said the apostle, “That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” Then, again it is said, “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows.” you would not take that to mean literal doves, but take it spiritually, then the matter is easily understood. Again, “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far.” Men tell us that the British navy are the ships of Tarshish, and intended, in the order of God's providence, to carry the Jews to Jerusalem. Really, how men can talk such trash, and print such trash, and how people can buy trash! Why, it is the worst nonsense. But if we take the ships of Tarshish, which the earnest Bible reader will see means ships that take long voyages, and therefore they are a figure of the truths of the gospel, because the glorious truths of the gospel sail over the stormy sea of time, and gather up poor sinners spiritually and savingly, and bring them to their own land, where the Lord shines forth in his glory. And then,

again, the Lord says, "For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron." You would not take that literally; to take those metals literally, see the absurdity of it. But if you take it in its proper meaning, the substituting of the superior for the inferior, here is gold put into the place of brass, silver put into the place of iron; so, you see it is the superior put into the place of the inferior. And what is the very business of the religion of the Son of God but to gather us up by the gospel net out of the stormy sea of the world? What is the very business of the gospel but to transform us into men conforming us unto the image of God's dear Son? The very business of the gospel is to consecrate us to God; the very business of the gospel is to give us wings like the dove to wend our way to that place where we shall rest. Why, it is the very business of the gospel to go down to the sea, and, as it were, do business in great waters; gather up poor sinners from the stormy scenes of life into that desired end to which they shall come. And then that, as I have said, substituting the superior metals for the inferior, shows what the religion of the Son of God is. I will not enlarge upon that idea, or else there is a great deal in it. See what life is substituted for the life we lost in the first Adam; see what a blessedness we have in the last Adam! We lost all we had in the first Adam; by the last Adam is substituted all that is divine, incorruptible and eternal. And then, again, this chapter goes on to show that these persons will not come into possession of eternal things by the light of the sun, nor by the light of the moon, for it is the Lord God that gives them light. "Your sun" for the Lord is a sun and a shield, "your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. Your people also shall be all righteous." So, you see, as the chapter draws towards the close, it drops the figurative, and takes up that that makes it impossible for us to be mistaken. In the first part of the chapter you have the fishes of the sea, and the creatures of the earth, and doves, and then metals, all these made use of figuratively. But when you come towards the close, now the Lord will explain everything. That is the Lord's way of doing things. He says many mysterious things to us as the first; but by-and-bye, when the end comes, the light will shine in perfection, and he will explain it all. And so, when the Lord comes to the close of this chapter, he then takes away, as it were, the figure, and shows the proper meaning of the whole. He says, "Your people", these same people, compared, you see, in their state by nature, to fishes of the sea, and to creatures of the desert, and to sheep that are gathered in to be sacrificed unto God, consecrated unto God, and to doves that fly to their windows, "your people shall be all righteous;" here is the explanation: "they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." And, indeed, the close of this chapter looks back to the beginning of this chapter. This chapter begin with the rising of Christianity, with the rising of the gospel morning; then Jesus Christ comes as the sun; then the apostles come as the stars; and in all this, at the beginning of the dispensation, was realized what is here declared, "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you." And hence, in the first part of this chapter we have an account of the ingathering of the people. And did not this light arise in the apostolic age? and were not vast multitudes, like the abundance of the sea, then gathered in? And the Lord has been gathering in sinners from that day to this; and we hope the day will come when the gospel will be very much more extensively received than it is now. I repudiate the doctrine of a earthly millennium; but I hold the doctrine of the progress of the gospel, the extension of the gospel, the triumph of the gospel; for the counsel of God must stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Now, then, to show that this chapter refers to the gospel dispensation, it winds up in this way, that "a little one shall become a thousand," now the Savior had a very little church on earth, "and a small one a strong nation." And if you will go to the 7th of the Revelation, you will find that this strong nation is made up of a people out of all nations,

and people, and kindreds, mid tongues. Here, then, was a little one that did become a thousand, a small one that became a strong nation. "I the Lord will hasten it in his time." Thus, then, this chapter represents, in the first place, the beginning of the gospel of the Son of God; secondly, it represents the progress of the gospel of the Son of God, gathering up sinners into the saving knowledge of God; thirdly, it sums up with the beautiful declaration of the people being all righteous, not by anything they have done, but righteous by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that by these glorious truths a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. Let me make, before I enter upon my subject, one more remark here; that it is by the truths declared in this chapter that a little one is to become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. And therefore, the minister who would be useful in real conversion, let him advance the truths which are here set before us. Therefore, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Thus, if you take this chapter spiritually as a representation of the dispensation in which we live, you will understand the whole of it, from first to last. Just see how absurd it would be to take it literally; we are therefore forced to take it spiritually. And there is nothing to be wondered at in this: you know how highly figurative the word of God is in setting forth eternal things.

Our text then, after this rather long introduction, I notice as containing two parts. It is said of these camels and dromedaries, which represent, of course, sinners, "*they shall bring*" these same creatures, "*gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord.*" Now some have thought that this bringing of the gold and incense represents the temporal part of the cause of God, as in the case of the wise men, that brought gold, myrrh, and frankincense to the Savior when he was born at Bethlehem. I have no objection to admit this. But supposing that there was never a single farthing literally given to the cause of God, even then our text would have a fulfilment; because the gold here spoken of must be taken spiritually, and the incense here spoken of must be taken spiritually. And I think I shall be able to prove that the gold here spoken of means four things, and I get that from the testimony of God's blessed word. Now, then, the first thing I think meant by the gold is, that of faith. Faith is spoken of in connection with gold; gold is made use of to represent the purity and the preciousness, and to suggest the idea of the riches with which faith is connected. The first thing, then, is that of faith. "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold." Not that I can separate faith from the Christian, and therefore I shall have, in all the four things I have to say about this gold. I shall have of course to connect it all with the vital experience of the Christian. Therefore, if your faith be a golden faith; that is to say, if it be pure faith, if it be precious faith, and if it be enriching faith, then you are a real believer. Let us now enter into this just a moment; I will say comparatively little upon this part. In the first place, everything is arranged, everything is settled by what the Lord Jesus has done. Without his righteousness, without his atonement the Law will hold you as its prisoner, Sin will hold you as its prisoner, Justice will hold you as its prisoner, Satan will hold you as his prisoner, Death will hold you as its prisoner, and Hell will hold you as its prisoner. Ay, say you, am I in prison in all these respects? You are; we all are; and an awful prison it is. It is an awful thing to be imprisoned by the Law, for its language is, "You shall not come out till you have paid the last penny;" and an awful thing to be a prisoner to sin, and a prisoner to justice, and a prisoner to Satan, and a prisoner to death, and a prisoner to hell; the Lord has shown it to us, that we are in all these respects prisoners. By-and-bye appears the dear Savior as the way out of prison. "As for you also, by the blood of your covenant I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope; even today do I declare that I will render double unto you." Well now, the person that is favored to see and to feel this, he can say on his knees before God, O

God, searcher of hearts, you know that I do see myself a prisoner in all these respects, and you know that, I do believe in your dear Son, that he can set the prisoner free; I do believe in the words of your dear Son, wherein he has said, "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed." So that you will believe the testimony of Jesus Christ setting the prisoner free, you will believe it with all your heart. Then your faith is golden faith, your faith is pure faith, for it unites you to God; your faith is precious faith, for by it the Savior is endeared to you; to you that thus believe he is precious. And it suggests the idea of riches. And what said the apostle upon this? "Rich in faith, heirs of the kingdom of God." "They shall bring gold." So, then, they can come to God only by this pure faith, by this precious faith, by this enriching faith. If a person comes to join the church, and does not bring this gold with him, we cannot receive him. We want to know whether you have any heavenly gold or not; we want to know whether you have had any communion with heaven or not, whether heaven has given you any of this gold or not. Then, when we can see that your faith is pure, and that it endears the Savior, and that it stands connected with the kingdom of God, why, we say, "Come in, you blessed of the Lord. Why stand you without?"

The second thing the gold means, in my estimation, is that of the truth of God. Hence, in the 19th Psalm, after the Psalmist has set before us very beautifully the truths of the gospel, he says, "More to be desired are they than gold." Yes, a promise of the gospel, my hearer, my fellow traveler to eternity, one promise of the gospel for your soul's eternal welfare is indeed more to be desired than gold. Suppose you had all the gold in the world, why, then your needs can only be supplied, that's all. But let a precious promise be brought, let the Lord give you a precious promise, that is more to be desired than gold. Let the Lord come in and say, "I will never leave you nor forsake you;" more to be desired than gold. "Yes," said David, "than much fine gold!" Yes, what is all the gold in the universe when set by the side of only one promise of a dear, blessed, covenant God? "Yes, then much fine gold!" What are all the fineries of gold when set by the side of the sweetness and blessedness of the promise of God? Ah, when his blessed word runs, shall I say, into the soul like golden oil, and inspires us. Ah, the Christian looks at the promise, and he says, That's my gold; that promise is my gold; that promise is my fine gold; that promise is my much fine gold. When the Lord made promises to Abraham, those promises were the gold he took with him. When the Lord made promises to Isaac, those promises were the gold he took with him. When the Lord made promises to Jacob, those promises were the gold that Jacob took with him. When the Lord made promises to Joseph in vision, those visions or promises were the gold, he took with him. When the Lord made promises to Moses in relation to the deliverance from Egypt, those promises were the gold that he took with him. And, passing by the Old Testament, come to the New Testament. When the dear Savior sent the apostles east, west, north, and south, to preach the gospel, the gospel was the gold that they took with them. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." So it was that Jesus was unto them more precious than gold, even more precious than the golden wedge of Ophir. And so, now, if you want to join a Christian church, you must not only bring a golden faith with you, but the gospel with you. The promises of the gospel, they are the gold the Christian is to take with him. And shall I be wrong if I say that these blessed promises will pay your expenses all the way to heaven, and will bring you into possession of a crown, a throne, a glory, and joys for evermore? This heavenly gold will make you kings and priests unto God; this heavenly gold makes the sons of God, makes those who are kings and priests to God. The dear Savior may well say, "Buy of me gold;" obtain my promises; buy the truth at any price, sell it at no price; "buy of me gold, that you may be rich." Alas, alas! the Laodiceans, I was going to say, were false coiners; they made up their gold out of their own works, said that they were rich and

needed nothing, and knew not that they were poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked. They did not want anything of Jesus Christ, they had so much of their own. But the poor sinner that feels his destitution, he is taught to buy the truth of Jesus Christ; that is, to abide by it by faith, and prayer, and seeking. Lord, give me a promise; Lord, give me a golden promise that shall enrich my soul; and then I can take the golden promise with me, and then I shall be received in the royal family, if I come with this gold; for the Lord says, "None shall appear before me empty." Though they are empty in and of themselves, yet, in this sense, none is to appear before him empty. Everyone shall have a heart full of faith, and a heart full of the truth of God; for "You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts will you make me to know wisdom." That, I think, then, is the second meaning of bringing gold; first pure, precious, and enriching faith; secondly pure, precious, and enriching promises. Bless the Lord, there is a certainty in the promises. Hence it is, as I observed yesterday afternoon where I was preaching, that according to the present way of handling the following scripture, it ought to read thus; "It is by faith, that it might be partly by works, that the promise might not be sure to any of the seed." Now that is the new translation; and that translation would modernize that scripture very much; it would suit the taste of the age very much; it would please a great many people; I should not wonder if I should begin to get a new name, if such a translation happened to suit me. But, for myself, I am not fond of that new wine; I like the older better; and so, instead of reading it, "It is by faith, that it might be partly by works, that the promise might not be sure to any of the seed," I still rejoice with all my soul to read it in the good old-fashioned way "It is by faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Then if it is to be sure to all the seed, not one shall be lost.

"Not one of the ransomed shall ever be lost;
The righteous shall hold on his way."

But again, bringing gold also means the testimony they bear of their own experience. They shall bring a testimony. If you are born of God you have something to say. You may not be able to say it, especially if you come before a church meeting, and see some four hundred people in sight of you; of course I know it is a task; I am fully aware it is, fully aware of that many of you could speak to a brother or sister in private very much better than you could in circumstances of that kind. And some ministers have been very kind; they say, It's very cruel to bring them before the church; it is really subjecting them to a very painful process, and we ought to do without it. I should be very sorry to judge harshly, but I have sometimes thought there is a little bit of craft in that; to smuggle people into the church by a side-door, and thus get those in that they would like to be in. There's a man, I should like him, he has got some money; let us get him in somehow or another; and a church meeting wouldn't have him, because he can't give any testimony; whereas, if we have a side-door we can let him in quietly. Mind, friends, I do not say it is so, I should not be so wicked as to say that; but still we have our suspicions about it. Well, now, it is subjecting them to a little bit of a task; but then, what a shame it is, if they are able to bear testimony of the soul-trouble into which they have been brought, and how they first began to have a hope in the Lord, and the first sermon, the first hymn, the first promise, that gave them hope; what a shame it is that they should hide such a light under a bushel. No, let them come. There was one of old, she said, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole." So, she pressed through the crowd, and touched the hem of his garment. She says, I am quite whole; I shall go now; I won't come before the church; I don't like that plan at all; I shall be off now; nobody shall know it. Ah, none of the disciples knew what was done. The dear Savior said, Somebody has touched me." Well, now for Peter's

explanation. Oh, of course, Lord, I can easily explain that. Why, the people throng you, Lord, and you say, Somebody has touched me. Why, it seems such a strange sort of thing. Ah, that is not the secret of it, Peter; somebody has touched my heart and soul; there is power gone from my soul, there is power gone out of my spirit. What is it? That woman is healed. And she saw she was found out, and she came and fell down at his feet, came before the church, and told him all that was in her heart. Depend upon it, it was a good sermon to hear; depend upon it, it was a good testimony. And one would say, Well, that is a good testimony, very pure, very precious, and very enriching; and another would say, I am very glad I was there, for there was the gold and incense together; there was the preciousness and there was the savor. And then the gold also means the character of the man altogether; that is the fourth thing. When he brings the gold, he brings himself, the character of the man altogether. You may throw him into the fire, but he will come out just as he went in, only leave some of the dross behind. "When he has tried me," said one, "I shall come forth as gold." Try you, Job; what are you, Job? What am I? Why, I am a poor helpless creature. "Oh, that I knew where I might find him!" but I don't. What are you in doctrine, Job? Why, I believe that "he is in one mind, and who can turn him?" So, do I, Job. "For he performs the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him." A high-doctrine man like you come forth as gold? "I shall come forth as gold." These are the only men that shall come forth as gold; for those that cannot stand the truth of God, you may depend upon it will, by-and-bye, find their religion to be a thing of nothing. Thus, then, they shall bring gold in all these four respects.

But our text says "incense" as well. This incense refers, of course, to prayer; as when, in the Book of Revelation, "golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." And now just watch me a moment. "And another angel," which angel, of course, was Jesus Christ, came and "stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints." "Much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of *all* saints." So, it does not appear, then, if I rightly understand that scripture, that there is one saint who can pray effectually without the intercession of Jesus Christ. It must be in Jesus's name; your prayers must be made acceptable by Jesus Christ. You may pray to holiness divine, or God in his holiness and justice, but he will never hear you but by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is his precious name that gives the much incense to the prayers of all saints. "Prayers of all saints." If you can pray, really so, that very circumstance proves you are a saint. If you know something of the faith of which I have spoken, and of the truth, and experience, and reality of character, as gold; if you do hunger, do sigh, do long after these eternal things, and if you are come this evening to seek the Lord, then this proves that you are a saint. "When you pray, say, Our Father." It shows that there is life in the soul, that you stand sanctified by God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and you will walk in that sanctification, and by-and-bye realize all its sweet advantages.

I now proceed to notice the second part of our subject, that *they shall show forth the praises of the Lord*. These same people show forth the praises of the Lord. And what are the praises they shall show forth? Why first, the righteousness and salvation of God; second, the delight that the Lord has in them; third, the relation into which he has taken them; fourth, the true conversion of sinners to God; fifth, the certainty of eternal plenty. Now, then, they shall show forth his praises. Let us be very careful, in conclusion, because it is a very important matter; if we are showing forth false praises we are not showing forth the praises of the Lord; if we are singing wrong songs, and, shall I say, singing wrong praises, and holding wrong doctrines, then, while we think we are praising the true God, we are praising his enemy all the time. Now let us see, then. "They shall show forth

my praises:” the praises of the Lord. Sixty-second chapter of Isaiah; “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace.” Shall I modernize that? “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest,” until the people are better, until the people work out a righteousness of their own, and half save their own souls. You see I am rather inclined to modernize tonight, nevertheless, I do not feel that I am becoming a modern; I have always been an ancient, and I will be an ancient. I glory in belonging to the ancients; I glory, in this gospel sense, in being old fashioned. Now, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof,” ah, that is Christ’s righteousness! “go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns. And the Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings;” that is, whom God makes kings, “your glory.” Now here are the praises. What is the minister to show forth? Why, Christ’s righteousness and Christ’s salvation, Christ’s righteousness and God’s glory. Are not those the praises of the Lord? Do you mean to say, Christian, that you have never so heard a sermon that when Christ’s righteousness has been set forth, your soul has been led to bless God for such a righteousness? Do you mean to say that you have never heard a sermon in which the salvation of Christ has been so set forth that you have praised God for that salvation? Do you mean to say that you have never heard a sermon in which the glory that followed upon the wondrous life and atoning death of Jesus Christ has been set forth, that you have never blessed God for it? What are these but his praises? Christ’s righteousness speaks the everlasting love of God to man; Christ’s salvation speaks the eternal mercy of God to man; the glory that followed the Savior’s work speaks out the deep counsels and the infinite goodness of the blessed God to man. These are the mercies by which those in heaven to eternity shall praise the Lord their God. Again, it means also the delight which the Lord has in them: “You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord.” What, a poor creature like me? Yes, a poor creature like you; the poorer the better. “And a royal diadem in the hand of your God.” As to your being a sinner, that is forgiven and forgotten, and washed away, and taken away, and thought no more of; you are to be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. How is this, where is the secret of this? In his love, he loves you; he is always thinking about you, you are never off his mind; he never moves his hand without you, he has graven you on the palm of his hand; would not do a thing that would hurt you, not for all the world. Nothing shall by any means hurt you, you that receive his truth and love his name. And is not this to his praise, that the blessed God should thus hold us as a crown of glory and a royal diadem? See Solomon’s Song, what is the whole of that book but an illustration of this? I am quite aware that I am now saying is quite out of modern style, for the modern style is to show forth men’s praises, and then call them God’s praises. Now you have done great things these last twelve months towards erecting a beautiful chapel; still, I am not going to preach about that, and make a to do about it. I will bless the Lord for it, and you do practically thereby show forth his praises. But these things must not stand as a part; no, no, you must not put these things into the place of the praises of the Lord. And then, third, the relation into which they are taken. “You shall no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzi-bah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married.” Now this is the praise of the Lord. Do I praise him for this? He calls us Hephzi-bah, to denote his delight in us; Beulah, to denote the pleasantness and beauty of the church. And are not these the praises the Lord, and do we not testimonially and practically show them forth? What is all you have ever done, and what is ah you ever look to do, but gratitude to God for these praises which you ever wish to sing, which you ever wish to enjoy, ever wish to possess? Fourth, in the conversion of sinners to God in this spirit of the gospel, and after this order of things. “For as a young man

marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you.” This, you will perceive, is explained by the apostle Paul in the 7th of the Romans. The law is there compared, to a first husband; that husband being dead, you are at liberty to be married to Christ; that is the apostle’s idea. “so shall your sons marry you.” Now, stop a minute; here is something here I very deeply feel, and hope I shall have an increased depth of feeling in these solemn, blessed things, the longer I live. Now, “so shall your sons marry you.” That refers to the true church, to that the true convert is brought to where Christ’s righteousness is, to where Christ’s salvation is, to where the church is a crown of glory; and that convert is brought to where there is an indissoluble relationship subsisting between Christ and the church. “You shall no more be termed Forsaken.” Mark that; no more so. See how the 8th of the Romans explains this, “Who shall separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus?” “Your sons shall marry you;” brought into this glorious relationship. Now what do we say this evening? How are we? Are we converted to God by Christ’s righteousness, and by Christ’s salvation, by his glory, and by that eternal relationship subsisting between Christ and the church? Hereby we show forth his praises. Hence when we meet with a sinner, and he says, Well, I have found out the church at last: that to me is the true church where Christ’s righteousness is, where it occupies its proper place, and where Christ’s salvation, and where that eternal relationship subsisting between Christ and the church is; where these things are in reality, that is the true church. Now, then, if we are fitted to show forth his praises, we must be thus one with the true church; for the song of eternal righteousness, the song of eternal redemption, is that which none but such can sing. David said, “I will show forth your righteousness all the day long for I know not the number there of.” So, I will cleave to it, and show forth his salvation from day to day. And then, again, in connection with this showing forth the praises of the Lord, ministers are a great help in this. May the Lord increase his ministers in their grace and gifts. For it is there said, “I have set watchmen upon your walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silent.” Now when it is said they shall not hold their peace day and night, that is a kind of Hebraism to denote constancy; that, I think, is one part of the meaning, never hold his peace day or night; it is sometimes night with the minister in his soul, and he says, I cannot preach now.