LISTENING TO GOD
Isaiah 1:1-9

"The Lord hath spoken." Quite so. But it was the fact that Isaiah took time to listen and to obey that made him the great saint that he was. Not only did God speak in the long ago, but he speaks in the here and now. "It is the Eternal speaking" is Moffatt's translation. Even now God is speaking to you and me. He speaks through His word, through conscience, through the Holy Spirit, through human need, through our own heart-hungers. If we listen, His voice will become clearer and our lives richer day by day.

Grant us to pray in childlike faith. "Speak Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Amen.
GOD'S READINESS
Isaiah 66:1-6
(Moffatt)

"Ready was I to answer men who never asked me." Here is God all eagerness to hear their prayers as He is to hear ours. So what? For multitudes just nothing at all. Why? Because they, as we, refuse to pray. This is God's constant heartache. He is ever ready to forgive, but so often we refuse to accept His forgiveness. Thus do we disappoint our Lord.

Help us, our Father, in the realization of Thy infinite eagerness to give, to be humble enough to receive.

Amen.
MOTHER'S DAY
Isaiah 66: 1-13

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." It is well to remember that the mere fact that a woman gives birth to a child does not of necessity transform her into a saint. There are mothers who are cheap and selfish and who continue to be so in spite of the clinging arms of little children. Yet motherhood at its best is something so beautiful that when God seeks to make clear His own eagerness to comfort, the best that He can say for Himself is that His touch upon our hearts is as healing as that of a mother.

We thank Thee, Lord, for saintly mothers "whose eyes are homes of silent prayer."

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Amen
INSTRUCTING GOD
Isaiah 40: 12-19
(Moffatt)

"Whoever was called in to give Him counsel."
Well, nobody was really invited, but quite a few
have volunteered. Some of these talk as if some
lesser god had made the world and had messed it
up. But often we are best at instructing God
in our own formal prayers. At an hour of national
crisis recently, a brother proposing to lead in
prayer gave all his time to telling the Lord how
wonderful we Americans are and what He ought to
do about it. There was no hint of humility,
no hint of "nevertheless not my will but Thine be
done." Such counseling is not prayer.

Father, save us from the deadly sin of
self-sufficiency.

Amen.
"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Life is a taxing business. The years build us up only to tear us down. The strongest of us soon grow tired. But there is a way of renewal. I am thinking of a small basin that hands long since dust, once carved in the face of a solid rock. That basin, though so helpless, is always overflowing with refreshingly cold water. This is the case because its supply is constantly being renewed from a spring hidden within the hills. You and I are that basin, God the unfailing Spring. As we wait upon Him, we renew our strength.

Father, we thank Thee for the renewal that comes from waiting upon Thee.

Amen.
THE NEW AND OLD
Isaiah 43: 10-19

"Remember ye not...the things of old. Behold I will do a new thing." Of course we are not to forget the past altogether. Let us thank God for those radiant yesterdays in which we can stroll now and then as in a garden. But while we are not completely to forget the past, we are certainly not to think of it so constantly that we shall seek to move in and live there. I am thinking of one now whose religious experience is largely a memory. Blessed is the man who has a memory. Blessed is the man who has new and authentic tidings of what God is doing for him in the here and now. It is not what Christ was to us yesterday that supremely matters, but what He is today.

Help us to realize, O Lord, that Thy mercies are new every morning.

Amen.
"Lift up thy voice with strength." That means something far finer than to yell. A loud voice is not necessarily a strong voice. In fact, loudness is often a smokescreen behind which we seek to hide our weakness and cowardice, or if we are ministers, our lack of preparation. It is often easier to shriek than to think. To lift the voice with strength is to speak with conviction, a conviction born of a vital experience. When the people were not able to resist the spirit and the wisdom with which Stephen spoke, he was lifting up his voice with strength.

Father, grant us so to live with Thee that our voices will have convincing powers. Amen.
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(Moffatt)

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through human need, through our own heart-hungers.
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lives richer day by day.

Grant us to pray in childlike faith. "Speak
Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Amen.
"To what purpose?" This question is addressed to those engaged in acts of worship. They were thronging the temple. They were offering sacrifices. They were lifting their hands in prayer in a thoroughly orthodox fashion. Yet their worship was not only worthless, but a positive offense to God. Why so? It was because they failed to see that worship to be of value must be an act of obedience and not an effort to bribe God. When we beg our Lord for the privilege of pleasing ourselves without displeasing Him, our prayers are worse than futile.

Help us, Father, to worship Thee acceptably by the surrender to Thee of ourselves.

Amen.
SIN SELF-DESTRUCTIVE
Isaiah 1: 21-31
(Moffatt)

"Strong men shall become like tow, and their idols like a spark, and they shall burn together."
Sin has a way of destroying itself. The lusts of the lustful man soon burn themselves out. The thirst of the drunkard at last destroys itself. But that is not the whole story, while sin destroys itself it also destroys the sinner. This is true both for the individual and for the group. The nation that is a beast of prey may destroy other nations, but it will certainly end by destroying itself.

Teach us, O Lord, to hate sin somewhat as Thou dost hate it.

Amen.
OUR SURE CONFIDENCE
Isaiah 21: 5-22
(Goodspeed-Smith)

"Cease trusting in man." What shocking advice! Cease trusting in man, that is something that Jesus never did. Denied, betrayed, crucified, He still declared that He would build His church out of faulty human material and the gates of hell should not prevail against it. But Jesus' confidence was not in man standing alone, but in man transformed and empowered by Almighty God. Jesus was as sure as Isaiah that man left to himself could not save even himself, to say nothing of his sinful world.

Help us so to trust in Thee, Father, that we may trust also in man when touched by Thy power.

Amen.
AN INSIDE JOB
Isaiah 3: 1-9

"They have regarded evil unto themselves."
Moffatt translates this, "They have wrought their own undoing." That is the case with all who are really undone. Our loved ones, our friends, our enemies can cause us much pain and heartache, but there is only one person in all the world who can work our ruin. That person is ourselves. If therefore life goes to pieces for you or for me, it is sure to be an inside job.

Help us, Lord, so to live within the circle of Thy will that Thou mayest make all things to work for our good.

Amen.
MISLEADING LEADERS
Isaiah 3: 10-26

"They which lead thee cause thee to err." If the blind lead the blind," said Jesus, "both will fall into the ditch." "My people's ruler" says the prophet according to Moffatt's translation, "is a wilful child." That is the literal truth in not a few homes. There are some children who are trained by their parents to be tyrants. They know that if they stamp hard enough and shriek long enough they can get their way. But Isaiah is here speaking of moral infants. Those in places of leadership were men who had grown up physically, even intellectually, but they had remained moral and spiritual dwarfs. They were wilful, selfish, and with no sense of right.

Give to us, O Lord, and to those who lead us the grace to grow up.

Amen.
"What have I left undone?" This vineyard of the Lord which represents God's own people, had become an utter failure. Why so? God makes it plain that the failure was their own fault not His. "What have I left undone?" He questions.

The only answer to that question is—nothing. Always our failures are our own. This is the case in spite of the fact that many of us have a secret conviction that God could do far more for us than He is doing if He were not so straight-laced and niggardly.

But for every man every day, God is doing the very best that that man will let Him do.

Grant us the wisdom this day, O Lord, to receive Thy best into our lives.

Amen.
"Me first." That is what we used to say to each other as children. That is what grown-ups often say. Isaiah knew men who were saying it. Some of them in looking out for Number One were doubtless failing, but others were highly successful. They added house to house until there was no room for anybody but themselves. But even then they were disappointed. "Many a mansion," says the prophet, "is to lie forlorn—splendid and spacious and—empty." (Moffatt) "Splendid," yes, but with not an eye to know its beauty. "Spacious," quite so, roomy enough for the richest of values, but empty, nothing within that really counts. Thus does he who seeks to save life lose it.

Save us, Father, from the tragic poverty that is born of self-seeking.

Amen.
COLORBLIND
Isaiah 5:20
Matthew 7:1-20

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" Recently a fine young man of my acquaintance was rejected by the Navy because he was colorblind. Since he could not tell green light from a red, he could not be used. But it is far more dangerous both to ourselves and to others to be morally colorblind. Yet it is possible so to trifle with conscience that we find it next to impossible to tell right from wrong. Thus we often reach the place where we fancy that we can reverse the laws of nature and gather grapes from thorns and figs from thistles. That is deadly.

Grant, O Lord, that we may so live up to the light that we have, that our light may shine more and more unto the perfect day,

Amen.
HICCOURHING HEROES
Isaiah 5: 22-24
(Moffatt)

"Woe to those who are brave...at drinking, mighty at ...mangling bowl." What scathing sarcasm, yet how true to life! Liquor is an everlasting liar. It tells the coward that he is courageous, the poor that he is rich. It creates such a black-out within the brain that the wisest becomes a fool. Yet the greater his folly, the surer he becomes of his wisdom. It makes the drinker blind to right choices, yet the more blind he becomes the more certain he is of his keen vision. One would think that such a foe of mankind whose best product is hiccoughing heroes would not have a friend. Yet there are millions who vote for it, defend it, drink it.

Save us all, O Lord, from boldness in doing evil and from timidity in doing good.

Amen.
THE NEEDED VISION
Isaiah 6: 1-6

"I saw the Lord." What then? The result was not a shout, but a sob—"Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips." We complain of a vanishing sense of sin. What is the cause? A vanishing sense of God. Wherever there is a sense of God, there is always a sense of sin. It was when the crucified revolutionary really saw the man who was dying on the central cross, that he confessed that though he was suffering the pangs of hell, he was suffering justly. Thus to see ourselves, and to confess is to find pardon.

We thank Thee, Lord, that if we confess our sins Thou art faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Amen.
THE SECRET OF STEADFASTNESS
Isaiah 7: 1-9

"If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." If your faith does not hold, you will never hold out," is Moffatt's translation. Surely it is easy to believe this wise word. There is strength in a faith that is fixed on others or on ourselves. Supreme staying power comes from a faith that is fixed on God. "I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand; I shall not be moved." It was such a faith as this that enabled hard-pressed Luther to say: "Here I stand, I can do no other. God help me." If your faith does not hold, you will not hold out, but if it does hold, nothing can defeat you.

Grant us, Lord, to be able to say out of our own experiences, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Amen.
CLOSING OUR FEARS
Isaiah 8:11-15
(Moffatt)

"Have no fear of what they fear." "He
is afraid of nothing," we sometimes say of
a friend. But that is a very questionable
compliment, even if true. Such courage
belongs to the bulldog more often than to
man. There are fears that are sane and right
just as there are fears that are silly and
wrong. Blessed is the man who wisely
chooses his fears. Such a man will surely
have a filial fear of God. This fear will
tend to dim out all lesser fears as the sunrise
puts out the stars and the moon.

Grant us, Father, so to fear Thee
that we shall fear nothing else.

Amen.
CONSULTING THE DEAD
Isaiah 8: 16-22
(Moffatt)

"Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?" Why indeed? Yet thousands in these desperate days are doing just that. Personally, I have never tried to communicate with the dead. But if I ever visit a medium, I am going to ask him to call up Isaiah. While he was here, the prophet did not think much of mediums. I should like to know if he has changed his mind. It is my conviction that he still believes that it is the part of wisdom to consult not dead men, but the living God.

Give to all of us, Lord, when we are desperate and lonely, to find our supreme comfort in Thee.

Amen.
A CHILD IS BORN
Isaiah 9: 1-7

"A child is born." The prophet is here speaking of the Christ Child. But always the birth of a child is an event to inspire hope. In every age the biggest question is the child question. An army is even now marching upon our world that is going to take over literally all that we have. It will take over every position of political power, every place of business, every church, every school, every college, every home. This army is made up of the boys and girls of the land. If therefore, tomorrow is to be better than today, that better tomorrow must come at the hands of better trained boys and girls.

Lord, grant us the wisdom to give our very best to the right training of our boys and girls.

Amen.
"The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Quite so! Even God has to have hot enthusiasm in order to put through His task. What then can the half-hearted hope to accomplish? Very little except failure. This is the case for at least two good reasons: First, to have no enthusiasm is to have little driving power. When difficulties see an earnest man coming they take to their heels, but they seem to look with contempt upon the lukewarm. Then too the halfhearted is likely to fail because he has to work without a sense of divine help. A wholehearted Christ cannot walk with a halfhearted saint.

We thank Thee, Father, for Thy holy zeal; give us to share in it.

Amen.
A SAME QUESTION
Isaiah 10: 1-4
(Goodspeed-Emath)

"Where will you leave your wealth?" One fact is sure you will leave it somewhere. You can't take it with you. That is you can't take it with you except on one condition. You can change it into personality. As Jesus put it, you can make it into friends who will be friendly here and who will by and by receive you into everlasting habitations. To invest in folks is to change our money into a coin that will pass as legal tender in all worlds.

Help us, O Lord, to change our coin into character.  

Amen.
SILLY BOASTING
Isaiah 10: 5-15

"Shall the ax boast itself against him
that heweth therewith?" Surely not. Such boasting
would be silly. It would be as silly as ours when
we boast over what we have received as a gift
as if we had won it by our own cleverness. If
everything were taken from us today except what
our own unaided hands have gained, little would
be left except our sin. Therefore, about the
only sane boasting is to boast in the Lord.

Grant us, Father, to sing with the
Psalmist, "My soul shall make her boast
in the Lord."            Amen.
"The lion shall eat straw like the ox."

In that case the lion and the ox can become friends and live together. But when may we expect the lion to change his diet after this fashion? Only when he has changed his nature. So long as he remains the same kind of lion that he is today, no ox will dare invite him to share a feast of straw. In like manner we human animals must be changed. We must be so changed that we shall seek to live for each other instead of upon each other.

Keep alive in our hearts, O Lord, the hope and the battle for a better world.

Amen.
DESCRIPT AND GARDENS
Isaiah 13: 14-19
(Moffatt)

"Who made a desert of the world?" Here is a man who might have been to the world of his day as lifegiving showers, but he chose instead to be as a blighting drought. There have always been those who have been willing to take rather than give; to rob rather than to enrich. But it is our privilege to make a finer choice. We can give ourselves to the task of changing deserts into gardens. Working with God, we can help to make the wilderness and the solitary places to become glad and the desert rejoice and blossom as a rose.

Help us, O Lord, so to live with Thee that we may be as rivers of waters in a dry place.

Amen.
HOLLOW AND LOUD
Isaiah 16: 4-8
(Moffatt)

"So hollow and so loud." Some folks like the loud. When I was a small boy the firecracker was my favorite Christmas present. I loved it not for its beauty or usefulness, but for its loudness. I was then experimenting in noises. But now having heard and made about all the noises there are, the loud does not make such a strong appeal. Then, too, I have learned that some things are loud not because they are so great, but because they are so hollow. Such was the shouting of the people when Elijah won his fleeting victory at Carmel. Generally speaking, it is the silent forces that are strong. Gravity never thunders, but it holds the universe together.

Grant us, Father, the wisdom to listen to the voice small and still.

Amen.
SOBBING ALONE
Isaiah 16: 6-14
(Moffatt)

"Moab then is left to wail for Moab."

Why so, I wonder? Perhaps Moab had so lived for himself that when trouble came there was nobody else to weep for him. If we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep, then when our bitter day comes, we are not likely to weep alone. But if we shut ourselves off from the sorrows of others, then one day it will likely be true for us as for Moab—that we are left to weep for ourselves.

Help us, Lord, so to give to others day by day that whether sunshine or shadows come, we shall not be alone.

Amen.
"At evening a terror, and gone by morning."

At first glance this seems a far too sunny reading of things. Yet despots who upset the world do have a way of passing. They can't last for long. Perhaps we find it hard at times to believe that the meek will really inherit the earth. But it ought not to be hard to see that the non-meeK are not going to get it. In destroying others, they always destroy themselves. At evening they may be a terror, but with the morning they are gone.

We thank Thee, Lord, that the final victory is not with tyranny and oppression but with righteousness and justice.

Amen.
SMITING TO HEAL
Isaiah 19: 16-22
(Goodspeed-Smith)

"And though the Lord may smite....He will
smite only to heal." God is good, but not goody-
goody. He sometimes smites both man and nations.
But He always smites in love, never in mere
anger. The vast majority of our suffering is a
result of our own ignorance and sin. Pain is
often the red flag that a merciful God waves in
our faces to tell us we are headed in the wrong
direction. Again and again God smites us through
natural law. What we sow we reap whether good
or evil. But when we turn to Him, He heals us
not so much of our pain which is only a symptom,
but of our sin which is the disease.

We thank Thee, Lord, for the joy that
so often seeks us through pain.
Amen.
"Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance." What a roomy vision for that far-off day! This prophet has realized that all peoples belong to God. He has realized further that his own Israel cannot be blessed unless the pagan nations share that blessing. Isolation has always been next to impossible. It is absolutely impossible today. In order for our nation to be safe we must see to it that all other nations share in that salvation.

Grant us and our leaders, Father, to see that no other nation can be safe unless we have a safe world.

Amen.
MAJORING ON MINORS
Isaiah 22: 1-11
(Goodspeed-Smith)

"But you looked not to Him." That is a common blunder. Here are people in a desperate plight. They are seeking by every known device to save themselves. But they are failing because they have forgotten their supreme resource—the mighty God. Thus they were putting accent on the wrong syllable. They were majoring on minors. They should have looked to God first. With their faith fixed on Him, they would not have been less active, but they would have been at once more wise and more mighty.

Help us to realize, O Lord, that it is not by might nor by power but by Thy Spirit that we can win.

Amen.
PERSONAL RELIGION
Isaiah 25: 1-5.

"O Lord, Thou art my God." Every value takes on a new significance for us when we can claim it as our own. This is supremely true in the realm of the spiritual. Luther is right in affirming that experimental religion is in the personal pronouns. I might be able to say with conviction that "The Lord is my Shepherd," then the morning light of a new day has already flashed upon the hills of my heart.

Grant us to say at this moment, "Lord,
Thou art my God."

Amen.
WIPING AWAY TEARS
Isaiah 25: 6-12

"The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." This is indeed a radiant promise! Yet how futile it is to wipe away tears that continue to flow. It is like trying to empty a leaky boat. I undertook such a task recently, but with only partial success. But when God wipes away our tears, He does not do so by resorting to the expedient of a pocket handkerchief as we often do. He attacks our trouble at its source. He dries our eyes by healing our hearts.

We thank Thee, Father, that we can bring to Thee our sorrow in the faith that Thou will either dry our tears or kiss them into jewels.

Amen.
PERFECT PEACE
Isaiah 26: 1-10

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." Perfect peace. That sounds like a big order for one who is to live in a world like ours. How, I wonder, did Isaiah come by this conviction? It was born, I am quite sure, of his own experience. His was a tempestuous day and he lived his life in the thick of things. But he knew the secret of peace. Day by day he had learned to stay his mind not on his circumstances, not on himself, not on his fellows, but on his God. Doing this, he experienced a peace that passed all understanding.

Father, we thank Thee that a sense of Thy presence banishes our fears, as morning banishes the night.

Amen.
"Thou art in action, and they see nothing."

Here is a bit of song that ends in a sob. God is in action. That is heartening. He is in action on your behalf and mine. He is knocking at the door of every heart. He is offering to every man His best. God is in action within His church, seeking to make it a glorious church without spot or blemish. He is in action also in His bleeding world, refusing to be discouraged till He has won the victory. But the tragedy is that so many see nothing of what He is doing. To such, God seems either not to exist at all or to be little better than a fiddling Nero who looks on while his world burns to ashes.

We thank Thee, Father, that we are sure that Thou art constantly in action on behalf of every child of Thine.

Amen.
"The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." Certainly. In fact such a refuge has a way of falling down of itself. The other day a lovely neighbor of mine dropped an iron on her foot. But denying the reality of pain, she did nothing about it. She found, however, that while her remedy was a real cure for an imaginary wound, it was only an imaginary cure for one that was real. Thus she ended by calling a physician. We, too, are wounded in a far sorer fashion. Our one hope, therefore, is in the Great Physician. To turn elsewhere is to trust in a refuge of lies.

We thank Thee, our Father, that every one of us may sing with the Psalmist, "I will say of the Lord He is my refuge."

Amen.
A Fruit of Faith
Isaiah 26:16-23
(Goodspeed-Smith)

"He who believes shall not be worried."

This will be the case regardless of circumstances. Just as anything can worry the man whose faith has failed, even so nothing can worry him whose faith holds firm. Faith and fear simply cannot live in the same heart at the same time. As another puts it, "Fear knocked at the door. Faith went to answer and found nobody there." If, therefore, you are tortured by fear your remedy is not to seek to conquer your fear by force. Instead fix your faith in God and your fears will vanish like mist before the sunrise.

Help us, Lord, so to trust that we shall not be afraid.

Amen.
SMOOTH THINGS
Isaiah 30: 1-11

"Speak unto us smooth things." These people liked smooth, complimentary things said to them. So do we. Everybody likes to be complimented. Since that is the case, everybody ought to be eager to commend. Those whose eyes sparkle at the very thought of resorting to the surgeon's knife are apt to be harsh and hard. But there are times when we thank our physician for telling us the truth about ourselves even though that truth be tragic as pain and death. There are times, too, if we are sane, when we welcome even unpleasant truth from the lips of those seeding our spiritual health.

Grant us, Lord, to rebuke with tenderness, and to be rebuked without resentment.

Amen.
GUIDANCE
Isaiah 30: 18-26

"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way." Divine guidance is a fact of experience. There is surely a Kindly Light that leads those who are willing to be led. God guides in many ways. Sometimes He guides by an inner voice, sometimes by His word or by the advice of a saintly friend. At other times He seems to guide by opening a door for us or by closing one. Not all who experience guidance are conscious of it at the time. But often as these look back they are humbled and gladdened by the conviction that God has led.

Help us, Father, to acknowledge Thee in all ways that Thou mayest direct our path.

Amen.
MEN WHO GIVE LIFE
Isaiah 32: 1-8

"A man shall be...as rivers of water in a dry place." What a beautiful vocation! Not all men are like that. There are some who by their very presence seem to wither and blight the fresh flowers of the heart. But there are others, thank God, who have the opposite effect. These break the drought of the heart and set its fields to flowering. How can we claim this vocation as our own? We learn the answer from the lips of Jesus: "If any man thirst let him come to Me and drink. He that believeth on Me....out of his inner life shall flow rivers of living water."

Help us, our Father, to receive from Thee that we may have something to give to others.

Amen.
MEN WHO SHELTER
Isaiah 32: 1-14

"A man shall be ... the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." This is a desert scene. As far as the eye can see is only an empty waste of sand. No, yonder is a caravan, a desperate caravan whose water supply is exhausted. From out the hot and copper sky a bloody sun is wounding men and camels with arrows of fire. Hope is almost gone. Then this oasis, this great rock with its healing shadow, where tired and tortured men find refreshment and rest. A man shall be like that, sings the poet. What man? The man Christ Jesus, for one. But this privilege is not for Him only, but for all who by surrender become like Him.

Lord Jesus, grant us so to share Thy nature that we, too, may be in some measure as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

Amen.
"The vile person shall no more be called liberal." Well, that is some gain. In a certain Texas city, a liquor firm recently sent three handsome checks to three denominational institutions, a Baptist, a Methodist, and another. The last accepted with thanks. The Baptist and Methodist returned their checks with thanks. They thus refused to bolster the respectability of a traffic which is at once a parasite and an enemy to every value for which the Church stands.

Save us, Lord, from calling the vile liberal, even for a price.

Amen.
THE SURE ROAD TO PEACE
Isaiah 12: 15-26
(Goodspeed-Smith)

"The effect of righteousness will be peace."

Righteousness and peace are related as cause and effect. Peace is the goal, righteousness the road that leads to it. Therefore to seek the goal while ignoring the road is sheer futility. This is true both for the individual and for the world. "There is no peace....to the wicked," is eternally true. Here is a man at war with himself. How can he find peace? He can find it not by seeking it as an end, but by getting right within, right with God. Having done this, peace will follow as naturally as day follows night.

Grant us the wisdom, our Father, to seek first Thy Kingdom and righteousness.

Amen.
STRIVING WITH GOD
Isaiah 45: 1-10

"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." How does this strife come about? It comes through our refusal to do the will of God. He constantly seeks to give us His wealth, but we cling to our own want. He seeks to share with us His beauty, but we prefer our own ugliness. Why is the sea so restless? It is being played upon by two worlds. When it would rest in the muddy arms of earth, the heights call to it. When it would respond to this upward call, the earth says, "Stay with me." We are like that troubled sea till we find rest by surrender to God.

We thank Thee, Lord, for a love that will never let us go and will never let us off.

Amen.
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Amen.
"Be ye saved." Salvation, that is something for which everybody at his best deeply longs. How can we be saved? We cannot do so by looking to ourselves. Even when we seek to pray and fix our attention on ourselves rather than on God, we receive more harm than help. We cannot be saved by looking to the church or to the Bible. As another has hinted, the Bible is like a telescope in that it is not simply to be looked at, but through. "These are they which testify of me." We find salvation when in utter humility we look to our Lord and to Him alone. None other can save us.

Give us, O Lord, to look to Thee today and all the days for salvation.

Amen.
AS A RIVER
Isaiah 48: 12-16

"Then had thy peace been as a river."

It was my privilege to grow up on the banks of one of the most beautiful streams that ever sang its silvery way to the sea. At times this stream received such abundant supplies of water that it overflowed its banks. At other times its supply was so small that it became a baby in comparison with its former self. But never did it go dry. In fact the more parching the drouth the more beautiful it became. To those who live within the Will of God, there is a peace as unfailing as this river.

Help us, Lord, so to live with Thee that our peace may be as a river.

Amen.
A WORD TO THE WEARY
Isaiah 50: 4-9

"A word....to him that is weary." Of all the benefactors we meet along the way, few are as helpful as those who know how to speak to the weary. There are so many weary folks. They are on every street, by every wayside, in almost every home. How did this prophet acquire his skill? He tells us that God had taught him. How? In all probability by girding him to face his own heartache. At least, it is generally true that those who help us most, when our desperate hour is upon us, are those battered souls whose own great needs have driven them to God.

Give us, Father, so to listen to Thee that we too shall have a word for the weary.

Amen.
HAVING MY WAY
Isaiah 53: 1-6

"We have turned every one to his own way." That is the worst possible indictment. Self-will is the fountain from which every sin flows, the most shameful as well as the most respectable. The Prodigal Son made self-will the law of his life and landed in a pig pen. His brother, governed by the same law, remained decently at home. One man may make self-pleasing the law of his life and end in the gutter. Another may obey the same law and end on the platform of a popular pulpit. It is not the differing goals that count, but the common motive that lies back of the goals.

Father, help us to pray from our hearts—not my will, but Thine be done. Amen.
A SAME QUESTION
Isaiah 55:1-5

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" A friend of mine told me that each loaf of bread served him while in a German prison camp was 25% sawdust. But this prophet saw multitudes spending their all for leaves that had no food value at all. Every man is hungry for the bread of life. That goes for the sinners as well as for the saints. The big difference between them is that the saints know what they want while the hunger of the sinners only that they are hungering for something that they have not found.

We thank Thee, Lord, that Thou dost satisfy the longing soul.

Amen.
THE SINGING HILLS
Isaiah 55: 6-13

"The hills shall break forth... into
singing." The joy of these returning exiles
is so great that all nature seems to rejoice
with them. The very hills burst into song
and the trees clap their hands in gladness.
But the trees did not clap their hands for
Hester Prynne in Hawthorne's "The Scarlet
Letter." Instead their very leaves seemed to
this wretched woman to be whispering her dark
secret among themselves. Truly nature so
takes on our mood that we make from within
us the world we see. To have a glad heart is
to see a glad world.

Grant us so to sing in our own souls,
our Father, that we may hear some
bit of music from Thy world.

Amen.
HIDEOUSLY RELIGIOUS
Isaiah 58: 1–7
(Moffatt)

"Fasting makes you fretful." Its purpose was quite the opposite. It was intended as an aid to worship. It ought therefore, to have made them more winsome and agreeable. Instead it only served to increase their ugliness. Sad to say this is not altogether unique. All of us have known a few religious people who were horribly religious. The Pharisee of whom Jesus spoke was such a man. He went to church, tithed and said prayers. But all these means of grace left him hard and cold. How tragic! Perhaps the greatest grief of our Lord is not the wickedness of the wicked but the ugliness of a certain kind of saint.

In humility, O Lord, we pray that Thy beauty may rest upon us as the sunshine rests upon the hills.

Amen.
A WATERED GARDEN
Isaiah 58: 8-12

"Thou shalt be like a watered garden,"
How beautifully suggestive! Some are just the opposite of that. Esau, for instance. He was a profane man. That is, his life had no fence around it. Nothing sacred was fenced in. Nothing vicious was shut out. Therefore, his soul was not a garden but a common. Any clovenfooted devil could romp across it at will. But if we are to be gardens, we must fence out the worst that we may fence in the best. Such gardens are so well watered, and kept that they abound in fruit and flowers, in usefulness and beauty.

Grant us, O Lord, the beauty of usefulness and the usefulness of beauty.

Amen.
GLEAMS OF GLOOM
Isaiah 59: 1-10
(Moffatt)

"We look for gleams and walk in gloom." This is true of a vast multitude. All of us are looking in some fashion for gleams. We are all eager for something that will touch life with radiance. But so many are disappointed in the quest. Eagerly searching for gleams we yet walk in gloom. Why so? It is not because there are no gleams for us. Radiant joy is within reach of all of us. How then can we arrive? Not by seeking joy as an end, but by seeking and finding Him who is its source. To find God is surely to have our gloom changed to gleams.

Grant us this day, our Father, to walk in the Light because we walk with Thee.

Amen.
"He will not hear." God is never deaf to our prayers because we have sinned, but because we refuse to give up our sin. Had the Prodigal Son knelt among the hogs and prayed to be taken home, his prayer would have been futile. But when he turned his steps home and prayed, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," his father answered his prayer far better than the son prayed it. God sees us in the far country, but He can feed us and have fellowship with us only when we come home.

Grant us, our Father, so to obey Thee that we may have power in prayer.

Amen.
God's Garments
Isaiah 59: 11-20

"He put on." The prophet here pictures God as dressing Himself in a fashion befitting His task. He puts on zeal. He is a God who is deeply in earnest. He also puts on might. He is not only eager to put through the task to which He sets His hand, but His power is adequate to that task. The third garment in which God seems to array Himself is vengeance. Finally, God clothes Himself with victory. Man and nations may delay the fulfillment of His purpose, but they cannot defeat that purpose.

Gird us, Lord, day by day with a faith that the final victory is not with man's wrong but with Thy right.

Amen.
INTERCESSORS
Isaiah 59: 16-21

"And he...wondered that there was no intercession." It is amazing how little the average Christian makes of the privilege of intercessory prayer. A few days after a service of unusual power in my church, I had a letter from a friend in a distant city that read, "You have been much in my prayers recently and I have reason to believe that God will soon bless your work beyond the ordinary." Prayer can and does release the power of God upon a definite person or situation. It is amazing, therefore, that there are so few intercessors.

Help us, Lord, to let our prayers rise like a fountain day and night both for ourselves and those that call us friend.

Amen.
"Praise for plaintiveness." That is an exchange that anybody ought to be willing to make. We all know people who are plaintive in tone and plaintive in what they say. Their normal voice is a whine. So long have they schooled themselves in complaining that they both talk and look a bit like a pain. Such plaintiveness is a wicked habit. It is not so much a misfortune as it is an ugly sin. Those thus guilty can change their plaintiveness to praise if they are willing to repent. What a blessing that would be both for those who whine and those who have to live with them.

Save us, Lord, from the ugliness of complaining. Instead may our lips and our lives be beautiful with praise.

Amen.
"They shall be called trees of righteousness." "Sturdy oaks of goodness," is Moffatt's translation. I like that word. The prophet is telling us what God can do with ordinary folks like ourselves. He can make us like trees planted by the Lord. "Planted," that means there is a divine purpose in our being where we are. "Here a sturdy oak is needed," God said, so He put you there.

We thank Thee, O Father, that the weakest of us may be like a sturdy oak planted by the Lord.

Amen.
"Where is He?" For whom are these people seeking? They are seeking for God. They are crying out for Him for whom every heart really longs. When did they ask this pressing question? They did not ask it in days of sunshine but in days of shadow. This question was born of pain, the pain of an empty present, the pain also of memories that blessed and burned.

Grant, 0 Lord, that we may turn to Thee woeed by Thy beauty, but if this wisdom is not granted us, may our need drive us into Thy everlasting arms.

Amen.
GOD'S READINESS
Isaiah 66: 1-6
(Moffatt)

"Ready was I to answer men who never asked me." Here is God all eagerness to hear their prayers as He is to hear ours. So what? For multitudes just nothing at all. Why? Because they, as we, refuse to pray. This is God's constant heartache. He is ever ready to forgive, but so often we refuse to accept His forgiveness. Thus do we disappoint our Lord.

Help us, our Father, in the realization of Thy infinite eagerness to give, to be humble enough to receive.

Amen.