

## The Great Invitation

### I. Introduction

- A. Summary of the last year - Hearing and Discerning the Voice of the Lord
- B. The Inspiration for this morning's sermon
- C. *Reading of Isaiah 55*
- D. This is God speaking through Isaiah. I pray that you hear God speaking directly to you through the text. Listen to the text in faith that God is presently speaking these words to you personally
- E. "This (*sermon*) is a modest attempt to aid God's hungry children so to find Him. Nothing here is new except in the sense that it is a discovery which my own heart has made of spiritual realities most delightful and wonderful to me. Others before me have gone much farther into these holy mysteries than I have done, but if my fire is not large it is yet real, and there may be those who can light their candle at its flame." Tozer, Pursuit of God.

### II. Brief Background of Isaiah 55

- A. Historical
  - 1. One or three author debate
    - a) If one, written during the life of the prophet Isaiah (8th-7th centuries b.c.) and foretold future events.
    - b) If three, chapter 1-39 written during the life of Isaiah, 40-55 written during exile, and 56-66 during the return and rebuilding of life in Jerusalem.
- B. Textual
  - 1. Despite its authorship, many commentators agree that thematically and stylistically Isaiah can be broken up into three parts: J. Alec Motyer describes these as three Messianic portraits: 1-39 (The Book of the King), 40-55 (The Book of the Servant), and 56-66 (The Book of the Anointed Conqueror)
  - 2. So Isaiah 55 is the final chapter of the second book, which presents and fleshes out the promised Servant Messiah who would purchase the righteousness that God's people desperately need but are hopelessly unable to obtain on their own.
  - 3. Isaiah 52-53 describes what the promised Messiah would do to purchase our forgiveness and righteousness (But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.), Isaiah 54 then spells out the implications of what the Suffering Servant accomplished for us, and Isaiah 55 finishes by calling us to respond to the gift being offered us
    - a) I see a correlation between this and the New Testament corollary: the Gospels (What Jesus did) to the first 3 chapters of Ephesians or first 11 chapters of Romans (What we

are being given) to the last 3 chapters of Ephesians and Romans 12-16 (How we should respond).

- (1) “Response is the keynote of chapters 54-55. Many divine acts are spoken of but the only human acts envisaged are responses: to sing (54:1), to enlarge the tent (54:2), to come to the banquet (55:1), to seek the Lord (55:6). The general relationship with 52:13-53:12 is clear. In his saving work, the Servant has done everything, removing sin, establishing in righteousness, creating a family. The way is therefore open for response, pure and simple: to sing over what someone else has accomplished (54:1), to enjoy a feast for which someone else has paid (55:1). Motyer p. 444
- (2) Chapter 55 continues to describe the blessings of God, but the emphasis is definitely on response.

### III. Isaiah 55:1-3a - The Invitation

- A. I want to focus primarily on the invitation of the first three verses, and then briefly touch on the remaining verses in light of how they speak to and double click on aspects of this initial invitation. I would love to go into more detail, because there’s so much here, but you’ll have to wait until Kenner goes through Isaiah.
- B. The invitation to come is universal (*everyone*) both because God, in his grace, desires that all would come and because every human has been given a thirst and hunger that needs to be satisfied. There is no one who does not desperately need what he is offering. cff
  1. Obviously the author is speaking about a hunger and thirst that goes beyond the physical
    - a) “Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it, that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing.” C.S. Lewis - *Mere Christianity*
    - b) The good news is that there really is water to quench our thirst, there really is bread that will satisfy our cravings, there is a real thing that all our hunger and thirst points us to.
  2. We are called not only to satisfy our hunger and thirst, but to *delight ourselves*
    - a) The Message version says, “Why do you spend your money on junk food? your hard-earned cash on cotton candy?”
    - b) Analogy: Kids in Mexico, Cotton Candy.
    - c) Our shallow, easily satisfied hearts believe God’s feast is full of the vegetables we hate the most, that delight is only found in the “pleasures” of life outside of God

(1) Not just overt sin: *Netflix binges, coping with food/alcohol/smoking, constant social media distraction, filling our calendars*

d) And yet he goes beyond satisfying hunger and thirst, as seen in the offer of the delicacies of wine and milk, in the commands to eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food. *Relationship with Yahweh is not just life, but life abundant, both in quality and duration.*

(1) However, experiencing this life will take cleansing our palate. Practically this looks like slowing down, taking time to enjoy God in Scripture and prayer, going to him instead of your easy fixes, thinking about his Kingdom first before yourself.

(2) Analogy: Hot Wings

C. What is the price?

1. At face value, God seems to be saying that there is no price, all we need to do is come.
2. We need to remember the context at this point though. It's not that there is no price for the food/feast, it's that the price has been paid by someone else (the Servant: Ch. 52-53).
  - a) "The thought of purchase is not set aside; this is no soup-kitchen, even if the clients are beggars. There is a purchase and a price, though not theirs to pay." p. 453
3. We will see in later verses what it means to "come"

D. In vs. 3, the metaphor of food and drink is replaced with the reality: "Come to ME."

1. Ultimately we do not need a gift of God, we need God himself. We were not created to be satisfied in creation, but in the Creator. The LORD himself is the feast that our souls need and crave.
  - a) John 6:35: "Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."
  - b) Psalm 34:8: "Taste and see that the LORD is good."
  - c) In light of hearing and discerning the word of God for our lives, the temptation is always to use God's words for our own purposes. But remember, the ultimate purpose of hearing God is **not** to know what job we need to pursue, or where we need to live, or where our kids should go to school. We hear so we can know who God is, how to be obedient to his will, to surrender more fully to him, and delight in him above and through all created things.

#### **IV. Isaiah 55:3b-5 - Who is invited?**

A. The first 3 verses taken by themselves appeal greatly to our individualistic minded American Christian culture. But an inward focused gospel is not truly gospel. God's love and forgiveness is not just for the chosen few, but for anyone and everyone who calls on his name. And we are empowered, glorified, made "lights" as Jesus would later say, to call those who have not heard this news.

1. This is good news for us because not only are we beggars invited into the great feast, but we are brought into the Davidic line and are co-rulers with God and ambassadors of God.
- B. So just like Jesus' reversal to the Pharisee's question of "who is my neighbor?", the question is not really "who is invited?" but rather "who are you going to invite?"
  1. What makes a feast a feast? Not only the abundance of food, but the abundance of people to share that food with.

## V. Isaiah 55:6-11 - How do we come?

- A. These verses answer the question: How do we come? How do we seek? How do we receive?
  1. One commentator writes: "If we may say that chapter 54 details the objective, God-given benefits of the Servant's work, chapter 55 answer to its subjectivity in emphasizing the response which brings those benefits into personal experience." p. 456
  2. And what is that response? To **repent**. Not only our prideful and rebellious actions, but from the evil desires of the heart and Godless worldview that produces those actions.
- B. We typically take vs. 8-9 out of context and make them completely about how we need to trust God in the circumstances that we don't understand because his plans are higher than ours. But the highness refers primarily to a distance of purity and righteousness, not to a distance of understanding.
  1. We repent of our ways and thoughts, and believe that God's ways are the right, true ways. We recognize the chasm between ours and God's righteousness, as Isaiah would say later: "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." and as we see in the throne room scene of chapter 6.
  2. The greatness of the distance between God's power and goodness, and ours, isn't mentioned so that he can gloat over us and make us feel worthless. It serves to make the relationship and the blessings that flow from that relationship that much more incredible.
  3. Vs. 10 - How does God bridge that gap, make this relationship possible? **The Suffering Servant**. Look at the correlation of 1 Cor. 1:26-31: 26.
    - a) "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

b) “In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.” (Hebrews 1:1–2)

C. *But there is a time limit to this offer of good news*

D. vs. 11b- “What I desire, the purpose for which I sent it” - “The Lord wills and effectuates the repentance which brings sinners home to himself, into the freedom of his banqueting hall” Motyer p. 458

1. He calls first, although we respond to that call. And his call is always to *himself*.
2. *Example:* Our hearing and responding to the word of the Lord to go to Mexico, DR, RVF and Westside. *Not primarily calls to go somewhere, but to join Christ in what he is doing through us.*

## VI. Isaiah 55:12-13 - What are we invited to?

- A. vs. 12 - “*Go out* is an exodus and exile metaphor. It speaks of the joy of erstwhile slaves and prisoners leaving captivity.” Motyer p. 458
- B. So what does it mean to eat and drink at the Lord’s table? It means to have forgiveness, it means to have joy, it means to have peace, it means to cooperate with God as he reverses the effects of the curse in our world. This is the fullness of the gospel, not just personal salvation but universal redemption and renewal.
1. It’s important to remember that this feast is **already**, but it is also **not yet**.
  2. We will not be able to experience any of these things perfectly until our King returns
- C. vs. 13 - “The transformed people in a transformed world will be an everlasting sign, will ‘signify’ who and what the Lord is. When people respond to the Lord’s word calling them to seek, forsake and return (6-7), the effective power of that word (10-11) brings them into an experience of the love, forgiveness (7) peace and joy (12) of God and lifts them into membership of a new world of eternal duration. This is what the Servant accomplished.” Motyer p. 458

## VII. Concluding Thoughts

A. *For further reflection: Luke 14:1-23; Matthew 22:1-14*

### B. God is not just true, he is beautiful and satisfying

1. “I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.” Psalm 63:2-5
2. *Do you think of God this way?* Would you give up a meal for him? Would you choose to spend a night reading and praying and worshipping instead of Netflix? Why not? Food, entertainment, recreation, accomplishment won’t satisfy. God is better.

**C. God has done absolutely everything, we need only come.**

1. All that he requires is that we turn from our not -food, our moldy rotting garbage scraps, and receive his feast.
2. Repent, in the words of vs. 2, means to stop spending your money for that which is not bread, and stop laboring for that which does not satisfy.
3. All has been done, now hear Jesus call to you this morning: Repent, Come, Listen, Seek, Call, Enjoy.

**D. We are blessed to be a blessing**

1. Luke 14:12-14 - The feast is meant to be shared with others who have nothing to give but everything to gain

**E. Jon Bellion - *Stupid Deep* - Stupid meaning: *very, stunningly, beyond belief***

1. *What if who I hoped to be was always me? And the love I fought to feel was always free? What if all the things I've done, yeah Were just attempts at earning love? Yeah 'Cause the hole inside my heart is stupid deep, stupid deep.*  
*What if where I've tried to go was always here? And the path I've tried to cut was always clear? Why has life become a plan, yeah To put some money in my hand? When the love I really need is stupid cheap, stupid cheap.*
2. This morning I want to seriously ask you that same question. What if you stopped striving to make something of yourself, to earn others and God's favor, just stopped, and received this true and wonderful word from your Abba Father: "You are my son, my daughter, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased."  
a) The love you desire and strive after has been bought through the costly sacrifice of Jesus, receive him this morning in faith.