



Isaiah 55:1-7
God's Invitation To Us

Summary: God invites you to leave that which is fake and false, and turn to Him today so that you may receive forgiveness and life.

This morning, I'd like for you to turn to Isaiah 55. In this passage, we're going to read about how God invites anyone who will hear to turn from what is fake and false, and come to Him so that he or she may receive forgiveness and life. In our time together, you will probably notice similar themes to Pastor Jeff's messages from over the past couple of weeks in our study in 2 Corinthians.

I find this really interesting because Isaiah, the prophet who wrote this very poetic passage that we're going to read this morning, lived and ministered about 750 years before the birth of Jesus. The apostle Paul, whose letter we're studying with Pastor Jeff, wrote to the Corinthians about 50 years after Jesus' birth.

When you put that all together, you have about 800 years separating our passage in Isaiah from Paul's letters. That's a very long time. In fact, it's over three times longer than the age of our country as an independent nation.

Yet what is remarkable is that the message God is communicating remains the same. The reason for this is because God is consistent. He doesn't change or vary, and because of that, God's word throughout the ages is consistent.

What is particularly beautiful about our passage today is that it shows us how God has gone out of His way to seek and to save those who are lost. And as we'll see in Isaiah 55, God's desire for people to be reconciled to Himself extends far back into the distant past.

In addition to being an encouragement and reminder to those of us who believe in Jesus, this passage is primarily an urgent call to those of you who do not believe as well as those of you who maybe once believed, or you thought you believed, but as time went on and year got added to year, you drifted and turned away in your own heart.

In all of this, we'll see how God gives us a choice. We can either choose to accept God's gracious offer through Christ and live, or we can spend our lives in other pursuits, which will never satisfy and ultimately end in death. So with that, let's read our passage, Isaiah 55:1-7, in which God through the prophet Isaiah begins with a loud declaration:

Isaiah 55:1-7 – *“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.*”

Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
³ Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.
⁴ Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people,
A leader and commander for the people.
⁵ Surely you shall call a nation you do not know,
And nations *who* do not know you shall run to you,
Because of the LORD your God,
And the Holy One of Israel;
For He has glorified you.”
⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.

Imagine that a man is standing in a crowd of people and he wants to get their attention. They're loud and boisterous and they are not going to hear him if he only speaks quietly and doesn't raise his voice. So when the prophet yells out in verse 1, that is the picture to have in mind.

The first point I want to draw your attention to is the fact that this entire passage is an open invitation. All of us have been given this generous invitation by God. And not only is it an invitation, but it is an urgent appeal. Through the prophet Isaiah, God is urging His people to turn from their pointless pursuits and receive His offer of forgiveness and salvation.

The idea of this being an invitation comes through in verse 1 where God through the prophet says: *Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.*

After getting the crowd's attention, we then read the invitation in which we're invited to come to the waters. We're invited to buy and eat. Here we see the first requirement, and that is that you must actually be thirsty. In other words, you need to recognize your need.

This implies an understanding and an acceptance of your own vulnerability. It's a recognition of the fact that you don't have it all together and there is no way that you ever will. This message,

God's invitation, will not make sense unless we first realize our own inability to find permanent satisfaction or purpose anywhere else.

This concept of thirst is especially powerful. Whether we fully realize it or not we are all thirsty and we are all seeking to satisfy that thirst somewhere. In fact, when people are really thirsty, they will consume just about anything in order to quench that thirst even if what they are consuming is harmful to them.

The world in which we live recognizes that we are thirsty and it offers us a whole line of religions, philosophies, practices, and products that we can invest our lives into and spend our money pursuing. But what we need to know is that none of that will satisfy us over the long haul. We can only find satisfaction when we drink from the living waters which God provides.

With that in mind, we read next that we are invited to buy and eat even though we have no money. We're told to buy wine and milk, but without money and without price. Now we need to recognize that this is poetry and as Isaiah writes this, he uses a beautiful play on words when he speaks about us buying without money or price.

If we wanted to make all of this less poetic and more straightforward, we could simply say that this gift is free. God uses the picture of wine and milk as examples of abundance and overflowing generosity. Wine is used elsewhere in the Bible as a picture of joy, gladness, and even healing while milk speaks of both nourishment and abundance.

I think we all know this, but milk is designed specifically for babies. It's their basic nourishment, which they need to survive and grow in their earliest days. That's one of the pictures we should derive from this. And at the same time, this image of milk also speaks of abundance.

In fact, you may remember that when the children of Israel were journeying through the wilderness after God had delivered them out of Egypt, they were told that the land of Canaan was a land flowing with milk and honey. So when we read this invitation to eat and drink, to have wine and milk without any price, this helps explain the nature of God's offer of salvation and everlasting life.

But the fact that this gift is free, does not mean that it is cheap. The truth is that it cost Jesus everything. At the end of this service, we will celebrate communion together and in doing so, we will commemorate the high price that Jesus paid so that we might be free and live with Him for eternity.

But the idea that this invitation is free is hard for us to accept because we are not used to receiving genuinely valuable things for free. We are normally rightfully suspicious when someone promises something to us without us having to pay for it.

It's the idea behind free samples at Costco. We all know the only reason you get to try a small part of a cracker is so that you'll then be persuaded to fork over a lot of cash and buy 15 boxes of them. The free part is simply meant to entice you.

The point is that we don't expect valuable things; items of worth and abundance without money or cost. It is never true in this life, except when it comes to what God has done for us and His gift of salvation.

So that is the invitation. You are invited to find satisfaction, salvation from God, and communion with God. But as we continue on in verse 2, we read a question:

² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

The second point I want to draw your attention to is that there are fakes and frauds which we can waste our lives chasing. We see this when God asks *why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?* We should notice that there is a note of surprise in this.

It's almost as if God is saying "why in the world would you even think to pursue these things? Why would you spend what money you have on things that cannot edify you?" And what this is telling us is that we can easily spend our time, our talents, and our treasure pursuing the things that don't satisfy, things that are not pleasing to God, things that we were not created to pursue.

This is written for us because we have an incredible capacity to waste our lives. We can waste our lives by indulging in sin and we can waste our lives as we pursue otherwise good things, but at the expense of a relationship with our God.

If we want to make this personal, then we need to ask ourselves what it is that we are pursuing above all else? What consistently occupies our thoughts? What are the things that we are looking to in order to satisfy and sustain us? The answers to those questions reveal a lot about us.

It's the same idea that Jesus highlighted when He said that *where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*. If you have never stopped, recognized your thirst, and turned to the Lord, then you will waste your time here by definition. You will spend your money on what is not bread and your wages for what does not satisfy.

Instead of pursuing those things, even good thing, God tells us in verse 2 to *Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance*. Here we are presented with a simple choice, and it is important to reaffirm that you actually have a choice.

You can choose to accept His invitation and if you had previously followed the Lord, but aren't anymore, you can choose to return to Him. But you can also choose to refuse God's invitation and spend your time, talent, and treasure on what will not satisfy. In the end, you choose the consequences of your actions.

You either choose God or you choose something else. You either choose life or you choose death. You either choose heaven through Christ's saving ministry or you choose hell.

So that's the choice. But then God begins to tell us the solution when He says [Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is good*](#). We're all listening to someone or something, and in all likelihood, we're probably listening to a lot of voices. Entire industries exist with the sole aim of capturing our attention and diverting our thoughts.

But in this we're reminded of the fact that we need to carefully listen to the Lord. The primary way that we listen to Him is by reading His word, as well as by gathering together for the hearing of His word like we're doing now, and by regularly seeking Him through prayer. The emphasis in this passage is on hearing, and we'll see that theme continue as we read on in verse 3.

[³Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.](#)

Let's remind ourselves of how we got here. When we began, we read of God's invitation where He invites us to come to Him. He gives us everything we need and then some, and we don't pay one cent. As we kept reading on in verse 2, we saw that there are fakes and frauds; things which are designed to divert us from God and eternal life.

As we read in verse 3, we're now told what we are to do when God says [incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live](#). This speaks of the fact that a response is required from us. God graciously invites us but we need to actually hear it, we need to draw near to the God who is calling us.

This ability to hear God so that we can respond to Him is itself a gift. This is something I don't think we appreciate like we should. But it is true nonetheless. For instance, we read in

[Proverbs 20:12 – The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The LORD has made them both.](#)

This proverb is using our ability to hear and see in order to illustrate the fact that the ability to perceive and accept God's word to us is a gift; it's something that is given by God. This is because before we turn to Jesus, we are spiritually dead and spiritually dead people can't hear or see or understand spiritual things.

What you must recognize is that if you hear the Lord calling now or in the future, you need to know that the ability to even hear Him speak is itself a gift from Him. And He speaks so that You may turn and live. This idea of hearing God and receiving life is also clearly stated by Jesus Himself in

[John 5:24 – Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.](#)

I want to draw your attention to the fact that Jesus says we need to hear His word. Once we do that and believe, we have everlasting life at that very moment. We no longer have any reason to

fear our death when it comes. When we hear the Lord and believe in Him, He fully saves us, and we can and should rest in knowing that we will not be condemned to eternal death.

Many of you took part in the last Turn Aside study which covered Romans 8 and you probably remember that a great deal of time was spent on the first verse which tells us that [There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.](#)

The issue is that before we turn to God we are in fact under condemnation. That is why this appeal is so urgent and why it is so dangerous to ignore. As we turn back to Isaiah 55, we'll next see that God provides an example for us. Let's pick up in the middle of verse 3 where God says to the one who listens:

[And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.
4 Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people,
A leader and commander for the people.](#)

What I'd like to highlight is the fact that God uses king David as an example here. As many of you know, David was Israel's great king and the Bible speaks of how he was a man after God's own heart. From a young age, David turned to the Lord, followed Him, and even went on to write large sections of Scripture.

We read of his good conduct throughout the Bible. But the Bible also vividly illustrates for us that David was a flawed man who engaged in serious sin, the most infamous of which was when he committed adultery with the wife of his servant, and then went on to treacherously betray his servant, had him murdered, and then took his wife for himself.

Yet when David was finally rebuked, he repented, he returned to the Lord and found mercy and forgiveness. Sin has consequences and David still suffered a great deal because of his actions, but he returned and was forgiven because God is faithful.

The point in this is that if a sinner like David can be entirely forgiven and restored, then any one of us can as well. But we are not automatically reconciled to God unless we actually turn and submit to Him. The time for that is now as we'll read next in verses 6-7:

[6 Seek the LORD while He may be found,
Call upon Him while He is near.
7 Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
Let him return to the LORD,
And He will have mercy on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.](#)

The invitation is generous, but there is a day coming when it will be too late. This is the third point that I want to draw your attention to, namely that your time is short. And that is why we're

told to pursue the Lord while He is near and may be found. Moses knew this well and he spoke about this in a prayer that we find in Psalm 90 where he said:

¹⁰The days of our lives *are* seventy years;
And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years,
Yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

The point is that even if we live a full life, even if we live into our 70s, 80s, or 90s, our time here is short and we soon fly away. But some of us won't live full lives and our end will come much sooner.

I was reminded of this a couple of weeks ago when I was doing my Reserve duty with the Coast Guard in another area. During that time there was one conversation between colleagues of mine that stood out to me and illustrated this truth.

In this conversation, one man who works in the emergency medical services was talking in graphic detail about an especially bad car accident that he responded to and which took the lives of a number of people. And as he described the scene, how unexpected it was, and the aftermath, it was a stark reminder about how fragile our lives are and how quickly they can come to an end.

The reason I mention this is because it's easy to be detached from these things and think of car crashes or serious illness or death as being things which happen to other people and which are a long way off for you. We so easily forget the truth that unless the Lord returns for us in our lifetimes, all of us will face death as countless generations have in the past.

But what stood out to me about this conversation is that if I had to guess, I suspect that most of those people who died had no idea that they were living through their last day on earth. Most probably had no idea when they woke up that morning that they weren't going to return to their bed later that evening.

I don't say this to manipulate you or produce an emotional response. Rather than being emotional, we need to actually be clear-headed about these things and think about them. When Isaiah tells us to *seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near*, it is because the day to call on the name of the Lord is today.

We each have an expiration date and once that day comes, our eternal destiny is fixed. The choice we make to either hear the Lord and follow Him or to make our own path, is the defining decision which determines if we will spend eternity with God in heaven or eternity alone in hell.

We have a choice in this, but if we turn to the Lord, or return to Him, we need to know that we can't stay the way we are. Instead, Isaiah says in verse 7 *let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*. To "forsake his way" means to repent. It's the realization that you need to stop going down your road.

Instead of going your way, you need to choose the way. You need to choose the path that God has set, the narrow path of Jesus. And this leads to the fourth point, which is that you are called to repent so that you may receive mercy.

I appreciate the fact that the unrighteous man is called to forsake or repent of his thoughts. We all know that we can typically fool people with our external actions, at least for a time, but our thoughts reveal who we really are. When Christ calls us to Himself, He offers to transform not only what you do, but He offers to renew your mind and the thoughts that you think.

As we close, I'd like you to notice these last words of our passage in verse 7. After speaking of the wicked and unrighteous man and calling on him to repent, we then read: [Let him return to the LORD](#). This is a really big deal and we need to focus on that word "return."

The only person who can return is the one who was once following the Lord, but who for one reason or another, stopped at some point. What I love about this passage is that this is an invitation to those of you who once followed Jesus, or at least thought you did, but now you've drifted.

Whether you've clearly walked away or have only moved on in your heart, God invites you to return and come back to Him. Those who turn to Him and those who return to Him receive mercy and are abundantly pardoned.

Thankfully, and unlike most of us, God doesn't hold a grudge and when we return to Him, He doesn't relegate us to second class citizenship. Instead, God delights in showing His mercy and forgiveness. This entire passage is a single plea from the God of the universe to you so that you may turn or return to Jesus and enter into the abundant salvation which He promises.

My encouragement to you is to not ignore Him when He calls because your time is short. If you recognize your need to turn or return to Him, do so today, repent, and seek the LORD while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near.

Lastly, there are many of you here who have recognized your need. You have accepted God's invitation, you turned, and you are now following Jesus. As you continue to walk with Him, my encouragement to you is to not forget the fact that your eternal life in Christ is a free gift from Him and it's to Him that we should continually return.

We can still be tempted even as Christians to find our satisfaction elsewhere. We can slowly be drawn away either with meaningless distractions on the one hand or with legalism on the other. But what we need to remember is that we stand on a foundation of God's abundant grace. And the charge for us is to abide in Him and let Him be the One to quench our thirst.

Let's pray.

Sermon Application and Discussion Questions

Isaiah 55:1-7 God's Invitation To Us

Summary: God invites you to leave that which is fake and false, and turn to Him today so that you may receive forgiveness and life.

- Can you describe a time when you thought you were receiving something valuable for free, but there ended up being a big catch?
- Do you have trouble accepting the fact that God offers us eternal life without us having to work for it? Why or why not?
- Isaiah 55:1 is a loud declaration that is meant to get our attention. What are some of the things that can distract you and inhibit your ability to hear God?
- Isaiah tells us that we have a choice where we can either hear God and live or reject Him and perish. How do you react to the idea that we choose our eternal destiny?
- What are some of the ways that we can regularly hear from the Lord?
- Read Proverbs 20:12 and ask yourself: can you think of a time when you heard the gospel, but it didn't make an impact for you? Why do you think that was? Can you recall a time when you heard the gospel and it became alive to you?
- Read John 5:24. What requirements does Jesus specify in order for us to receive everlasting life? Are we still under judgment once we have heard Jesus and believed? Do we still need to fear death?
- Our lives can rapidly come to an end. Do you believe you are ready to stand before Jesus? Why or why not? Do you still have lingering questions about the faith that keep you from trusting in Jesus? If so, are you posing these questions to a mature Christian?
- Have you ever experienced a time where you walked away from God? Can you describe the process you went through to return to Him?
- What action step do you need to take after studying this passage?