

A God's View: Of You! Pt. 1
Seeing Through
Isaiah 55: 1-9

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Gerrit Scott Dawson**

What do you look like from a God's-eye view? What is God's opinion of you? What is God's desire for you? These are all identity questions. In fact, they're the ones that really matter. God sees truly. God sees all the way through. God sees me as I am. You could say, "I am seen by God, therefore I am. I am thought about by God, therefore I am." His view is the only one that matters because he is the Creator. He is the one who alone sees according to Reality. Because God is Reality and Truth. God's opinion is the one opinion that gives me my identity. It's the only one that matters. Because it's the only opinion, the only view of me, that actually matches what is truly so.

This is what we're going to be talking about in the following weeks. We're going to be examining the treasure trove of identity statements that the Triune God gives to us in the last section of the book of Isaiah. Today, we're going to start out by considering the LORD's desire. As we study Isaiah 55, this is the question I invite you to be thinking about. I hope you will send me some comments after the message concludes. Here it is: *In Isaiah 55, what does the LORD desire for me?* As we walk through this passage, keep that question burning in your mind and heart. In terms of this particular passage, what does God want for me? What's his passion for us?

The chapter begins with a friendly interruption. Ho! Hey there! The English Standard Version leaves the Hebrew word untranslated, which is too bad. The King James picks it up: *Ho! Everyone who thirsts*. These days, only Santa gets to say a hearty "Ho! Ho! Ho!" It's what he says before his big seasonal announcement. "Ho! Ho! Ho! Hey, hey hey: It's Christmas! Be merry." I can see wagon trains in the old frontier shouting out as they drive the horses, "Westward Ho!" Or I can hear Yukon Cornelius when their little iceberg hits the shore, "Land Ho!" Look here! Yo! Oi!

And so that's the first way to answer our question. In Isaiah 55, what does God desire of us? First, he desires our attention. He wants to communicate and he wants us to listen. He interrupts our regularly scheduled life with a special announcement. God is a hearty engager of people. He's interested in us.

This announcement is an invitation. A hearty “Y’all come!”

Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters, and
he who has no money come, buy, and eat!
Come buy wine and milk, without money and without price.

God desires that we be satisfied. He desires us to have our thirst slaked. And our hunger filled. He wants us to come to him to get these deep, urgent needs met. And lack of purchasing power is no barrier. This is a crazy invitation. Come buy what you need but you don’t need money. Come purchase what you have to have, but remember your money is no good here. God’s economy doesn’t work like our economy. Because with God there is no scarcity. He can give away all we need and want, because he has limitless stores. Infinite capacity. And he wants us to come to him because he wants to give to us.

What does God desire of you? He wants you to hear him engaging your life. He wants to invite you to come to him to get what you most need. He wants to give you what satisfies the heart.

Now why is the LORD, the Creator of all, making such an offer to us? From a God’s eye view, the LORD sees our lives. He sees through our racing minds. He sees past our striving. He sees how hard we are trying to make life work and he knows we are not succeeding. So he asks us a question,

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?
And your labor for that which does not satisfy?

We all know experiences of not getting what we thought we paid for. That expensive dish in a fancy restaurant that has a thimble-full of food on it. The disappointment that follows a major purchase when it didn’t thrill you for more than a minute and now seems a waste. We know what it feels like to work really hard and see nothing. Writing for three days and having a paragraph to show for it. Sewing for hours only to find you had the fabric upside down. Spending weeks negotiating a deal only to see the buyer walk away at closing.

For God’s people in those days, it was worse. They were totally disoriented. The Babylonians had overrun their country. The Temple was burned to the ground. Businesses and homes were seized. The people were carried off to a faraway land. Nothing worked like it was supposed to. Perhaps for the first time since the second

World War, we have a real connection to people in exile. We are dizzy with the changes. Nothing is working like it used to. All our hard work is slipping through our fingers. Nothing seems certain. These days have been confusing. We're rethinking everything. It's exhausting. It seems that our money doesn't buy what we thought it would. Our labor doesn't seem to produce the usual results. We don't know who we are. We are not who we thought we are.

The LORD I Am interrupts our dizzy thoughts and frenetic striving with an invitation. Ho, everyone who thirsts! Look up for a second. I'm here. And I want you to come to me. Come to me if you are thirsty and I will give you drink. It doesn't cost what you don't have. It just costs your coming to me. I see through to the truth of your life. Let me reorient you to my Life.

I believe that Isaiah 55 was foundational to Jesus. I believe that Jesus studied the Scriptures intently. He saw in Isaiah 55 his Father's deep desire for his people. Jesus also saw a clear reference to the Messiah. Jesus understood his mission as he internalized this chapter. The LORD invites his people to come to him for life. Then he makes a promise, "I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David." Our God not only desires us to come to him. Before we ever make a move back towards him, God stakes his eternal life on us. He makes a binding, eternal covenant promise. He reminds them of the unconditional covenant he had made with David, the promise that through his line would come a king, not only of Israel, but of the whole world. And a Savior, not only for the Hebrews but for everyone. "He will be a leader and a commander for the peoples" (Is. 55: 4). Jesus would have read that and understood, "Here are words for me. I am to put my Father's desire for his people to come to him into action. Because I have come from my Father to gather his people."

In fact, we can hear Jesus being sourced by Isaiah 55 in his teaching. In Matthew's gospel we read how Jesus looked at the people. He saw through their lives to their core fears, their deep needs and profound worries. "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt. 9: 36). He saw them, and he felt deeply moved by their fear and disorientation. A little later, Jesus said to them, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11: 28). Another time Jesus stood up and cried out with a loud voice, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me...out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (Jn. 7: 37-38).

The eternal Triune God stepped into the world and beheld us, on the ground, as we are, as one of us. From our eye-level, Jesus mirrored his Father's desire as he beckoned us, "Come to me. I will give you rest. Come to me. I will give you drink. "The water that I give will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn. 4: 14).

In days of disorientation, the Triune God of grace desires to reorient us to himself. He invites us to come to him to get put right. To get our thirst slaked and our hunger filled.

When we lived at the end of the road at the foot of a mountain, a lot of stray dogs ended up in our yard that was already full of dogs and kids. I remember taking one particularly sad, hungry little pup to our vet for a check over. I wondered if the dog would wander off the same way he had wandered in. "No," he said, "He'll stay for the food. And the companionship. Actually, he'll stay for the companionship even if there is no food. It's the deeper need." There were deep spiritual implications in that country vet's words. We have a need for nourishment even deeper than physical filling. We want to know we are not alone. We want to know there is someone with us. We want to be loved. It gives our whole lives a purpose and a point.

Our God looks upon us and he loves us. He interrupts us with a hearty "Ho!" He issues his invitation, "Come to me! You don't need money. It doesn't work in my economy anyway. Come to me! You don't need righteousness. I see through you and I know you are broken, sinful, compromised and ruined. I have that covered. Just come."

There is no price that earns us the living water our God invites us to drink. But there is a price. There is a demand. Our God is urgent in telling us clearly what he wants from us.

Seek the LORD while he may be found.
Call upon him while he is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way.
And the unrighteous man his thoughts.
Let him return to the LORD,
That he may have compassion on him,
And to our God for he will abundantly pardon. (55: 7-8).

What does God want from us? What is his desire that we give him in return for his life-giving water? Listen to the verbs Isaiah uses: Seek. Call. Forsake the wicked way. Return to the LORD.

You don't have to pay. You just have to come. But to get here, you've got to let go. You've got to let go what you have chosen as more important than me. You've got to give up the idea that life is about you. You've got to stop rehearsing your resume as the reason for your acceptance. You've got to stop giving yourself to lesser gods that I abhor: to angers, to lusts, to greeds, to cruelties, to pride, to control, to autonomy. Those gods are all illusions. That money doesn't work in my economy. It doesn't even work in the false gods' economy: you pay and they don't deliver.

So come home. Return. Ho! Wake up. See my arms outstretched. I have the ladle of living water held out to you to drink. Drop what you're holding so tightly so you can get here. Step out of the nets of self that are tangling your feet. Take off your mask so you can sip from it. Peel off the protection you have devised against me: I see through it all anyway. Come you who are thirsty! Come and drink! That your soul may live!

He has pledged himself to us with an eternal covenant of steadfast love. He has enacted that love in coming to us in Jesus Christ. He has fulfilled that promise in taking away all that stands between us by the death and resurrection of Christ. He has paid the price and secured the life. Now, you may never have known the taste of living water. You may never have sipped the joyful cup of everlasting life. You may never have been filled with satisfying food of forgiveness. You may never have known the joy of eating at the King's house. So what are you waiting for? We know now more than ever that laboring for that which does not satisfy is a dead end. The normal prescribed means of fulfillment have proven empty. Come home to the LORD who calls you. Turn to him. Return from wicked ways and give yourself to him. Ask for his living water and eternal bread.

Or, you may have been a Christian for years, but you are anemic. Listless in faith. Or angry and smoldering underneath because God seems to have let you down. You may be hedging your bets, staying outside and feeling the spiritual loneliness, when what you need is to go home. You may be clogged up, disoriented, distant. Because you are clasping your fears so tightly. You are drinking in worry like mother's milk when it's poison. You are pridefully holding on to righteous anger for wrongs against you. You are secretly trying to serve yourself as well as God, to have it all in this life as well as the next.

It's time to go home. Hear the call! Ho! Everyone that thirsts, come to the waters. Come, buy and eat! Without money! As the old Wesley hymn rejoices, "Jesus ready stands to save. All the fitness he requires is to feel your need of him." This is what he wants from you. Hear him. Drop whatever holds you back. Come to him. While he is near. Right now. Turn to him and God will shower his compassion on you.

Prayer.

Today for our talk-back, please message in your answers to this question, "From the view of Isaiah 55, what does your God desire?"