

As we begin looking at Isaiah 55, we should be sure to see it in light of the previous two chapters. Chapter 53 predicted the coming Servant would suffer and die for the sins of many. Chapter 54 describes the gracious benefits received by those who accept the Servant offering Himself as their guilt offering (53:10). Because of what the Servant has done for us we enter into an everlasting covenant of peace with God (54:10). He promises us a multitude of spiritual offspring (54:1), that we will never be ashamed (54:4), to be like a husband to us (54:5), to protect and vindicate us (54:17). Perhaps the greatest of the promises is that His steadfast love will never be taken from us (54:10). That is why that chapter started by telling us to sing.

In chapter 55 the call goes out to the world to be recipients of these blessings. It is a call that is echoed by Jesus during His ministry and also by His bride in the Revelation (Revelation 22:17). That tells me that the early church understood this message given through Isaiah was the message they were to proclaim.

¹ "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. Isaiah 55:1 Here is the invitation. Come! We are invited four times in this one verse. The Suffering Servant, Jesus, paid the price. We are invited to come and freely partake of Him. Oswald Chambers wrote, "His (Jesus') word 'come' means 'transact.' 'Come unto Me.' The last thing we do is to come; but everyone who does come knows that that second the supernatural rush of the life of God invades him instantly. The dominating power of the world, the flesh and the devil is paralyzed, not by your act, but because your act has linked you on to God and His redemptive power."¹

There is a theological debate about whether or not you can choose to come to Jesus. One side says that we can't do anything about our salvation. God chooses us. He calls us. He makes us respond. The reasoning behind this opinion is that the Bible tells us God is sovereign and that man can do nothing good (Psalm 14:3). The doctrine is called "the depravity of man." From heaven's perspective, mankind without God is incapable of a selfless, godly action (Isaiah 64:6). It is quite humbling to accept these truths. But does man really have no choice in the matter?

The other side of the debate says that God has given us a gift of freewill. We are invited to choose to come to the waters or we can reject the invitation. Somewhere in the middle is the opinion that God convicts everyone and enables every depraved soul to come, but the majority refuse to come (Matthew 7:13). That is my personal opinion. I can't see why God would invite us if we have no choice in the matter. Why would the call go out to the world if the world isn't given the opportunity and ability to come? How could God love the world if He just randomly picks a few to be saved? And how could hell be justice unless a soul willfully chooses to reject the loving sacrifice of Jesus (2Peter 3:9)?

What is this "water" that we are invited to partake? Jesus took this up in the beatitudes when He declared, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). **Jesus saw the souls of mankind thirsty to be filled with something.** Some will respond to the conviction of the Spirit and hunger and thirst for righteousness. They will come to the water. Jesus is that rock from whence the living water flows (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is our source for righteousness.

The God-sized hole in our heart aches to be filled with something. We try wealth, pleasures, relationships, fame, education, and countless other things. We are all born thirsty. The question is this -what are we thirsting for? When the Spirit of God shows us that the only real way to satisfy that thirst is by accepting what Jesus has done for us, the gift of freewill becomes a blessing or a curse. We choose to drink of the water Jesus has provided or we drink something else that will never fully satisfy the longing He has put in our hearts. Jesus made it clear that He is the water Isaiah is speaking of when He stood up on the last great day of the Feast of Tabernacles and said, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). That is an invitation to all, for we all thirst for something. Jesus was telling the world that He alone satisfies our thirst.

The rest of the first verse tells us we don't need money to obtain the wine and milk that God is offering us. I understand the wine to be the Holy Spirit and the milk to be the Word of God. The Jews saw wine as symbolic of joy (Ecclesiastes 10:19). The second fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy (Galatians 5:22). Peter wrote that young Christians should crave the sincere milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2). The Spirit and the Word are offered freely to us. True Christianity never asks a price for the things of God. Freely we have received, and freely we give (Matthew 10:8).

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Isaiah 55:2 What a penetrating question! Everything the world promises will bring you satisfaction comes with a hefty price tag. It's usually money, but the price can also be your physical health, your marriage, even your sanity. The world cannot give you the bread that satisfies. As I began praying about this passage, it dawned on me that this is what Jesus was speaking of in John 6. He had just fed the multitude and they followed Him trying to get more fish sandwiches (John 6:11). *²⁷ Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.*" John 6:27 *³⁵ Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.* John 6:35 Just as Jesus gives Himself for our spiritual thirst, He also gives Himself for our spiritual hunger. He alone satisfies. The world will always leave you hungry and thirsty for more.

How do we receive this bread that satisfies? Isaiah told us in the last half of verse 2. *Listen diligently to me...* If we will listen to Jesus speak the truth to our hearts, we will

find our souls invaded with that supernatural rush of life. It reminds me of Martha and Mary. Martha was busy making the food that perishes while Mary was devouring the rich food by listening to Jesus' speak (Luke 10:41-42).

It is very important for us to ask ourselves this question. **Why is the kitchen of busyness so much more attractive to us than this feast that Jesus lays before us?** The duty of a servant is to listen, but we would rather be a lord (John 8:47). Maybe we want people to think well of us. Maybe we are afraid that partaking of the feast of Jesus will cause us to be indebted to Him. We are already indebted to Him for our life, every breath, every ability, everything (1 Corinthians 4:7)!

In case we didn't hear the first "listen" (actually the Hebrew is the word "listen" twice), in case our pots and pans were banging too loudly to hear Jesus in the other room, the next verse says it another way. *³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.* Isaiah 55:3 The first verse told us to come to the waters, and we saw Jesus applied it to Himself. Here the Lord says, "Come to me!" That is because the LORD who is speaking through Isaiah is Jesus, the Suffering Servant of chapter 53. Get out of the kitchen, come sit at His feet, and hear Him so that your soul may live! He is the source of everlasting life. When Jesus said, "Come to me all you who labor..." (Matthew 11:28), He was drawing from this passage. Why do we labor for what does not satisfy?

We must come to Jesus to enter that everlasting covenant of love God made with David. This is so richly Messianic! David wanted to build a house for God, a temple to replace the tent of worship. God told David that his son would build the temple. Instead of David building a temple for God, God was going to build David a house. God was saying that He would cause one of David's descendants to reign on David's throne forever. He promised to never remove His love from that One that was coming (Psalm 89:28). It was a promise that the Messiah would come through the line of David (Isaiah 9:7) and build the spiritual temple of living stones (Eph 2:21-22). Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise.

How can you enter into that covenant of sure, and everlasting love that God promised David, that house that God was going to build? You enter into Christ (Romans 8:39). You become one with Him as His bride. You become the body of Christ in this world. That happens when we listen and respond to the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). When He spoke to you, how did you respond? **Are you hearing Him now? How will you respond today?**

There are some who tell us God doesn't speak to us today. We just read the Word and do what it says. I understand their concern that we might get away from the plumb line of the Word, but God is looking for those who worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:23). We are born again through the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23), but Jesus also said we must be born of the Spirit (John 3:6). Without the Spirit we will forever have the

Word in our head and not in our heart. That creates legalistic people who are critical of everything instead of joy filled lovers of God.

⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. Isaiah 55:4-5 David was a witness of a man with heart after God (1 Samuel 13:14), God's chosen leader of people. How much greater is the Son of David who will reign forever? I see this verse fulfilled in the early Jewish church calling Gentiles into the kingdom. Gentiles in the first centuries ran to the Apostles. Why? Because Gentiles saw a God who loved them enough to die for them. It was also because of the glory of the Lord they saw on those early Jewish believers. When Greeks and Romans with their multitudes of self-serving gods heard of a God who loved them and invited them to quench their thirsty souls and satisfy their spiritual hunger, they responded to the Spirit's invitation. They came to Jesus and drank freely. It continues to this day, as shining, Spirit filled believers offer real satisfaction to the thirsty.

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, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. Isaiah 55:6-7 When can the LORD be found? When is He near? It is when the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (John 16:8). It is then that He enables us to seek Him. If we don't, we are refusing His grace and goodness. We are turning our backs on His mercy. You might ask, "Can't He be found any time? Isn't He always near? The problem is our fallen nature I mentioned at the beginning of the sermon. We won't seek except for God intervening in our lives at those perfect times when we are most prepared to hear and respond. Don't let those moments pass you by without responding. Most of you have responded, and that is why you are here today. You want to partake of that milk of the Word and feast on the rich fare He offers us. But if you haven't made that transaction, if you haven't responded to His offer to be your guilt offering to God, don't let the chance pass you by. What God is saying in this verse is a warning not to harden your heart. Once you do, it is easier to do the next time, until eventually you have chosen to never respond. God longs to have compassion and abundantly pardon us.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. ⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 This is our problem. God's thoughts and ways are pure and holy. Ours are not. We often quote this verse when we don't understand what God is doing. In the context of the passage, however, God is telling us the difference from sinful man and a holy God. He is telling us how much we need Him. The ways and thoughts of man in verse 7 were evil and unrighteous. God is

announcing through Isaiah why we need the Suffering Servant to take our sins, but also telling us the great promises for those who do seek and call on Him (Romans 10:13).

We can never get to God intellectually. Our most sincere desires to be good aren't enough. We need the Holy Spirit to draw us into that transaction of exchanging our sins for Jesus' righteousness (John 6:44). We must respond to His conviction and deliberately choose Jesus over our own ideas of how we can be good or spiritual. Jesus said, "I am the way" (John 14:6). Argue with it if you like, but it won't change the fact.

¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. Isaiah 55:10-11 Here is the great difference between our words and God's. His accomplishes something. His have lasting value. If we want to join in His thoughts and ways, we have to allow His Word to renew our minds (Romans 12:2). We have to take time to be in His Word and in prayer. We need to learn to wait on the Lord and seek His leading (Proverbs 8:17). Regardless of the hardness of the hearts of people, God's will is going to prevail. You can get on board by seeking Him and calling on His name when He is near. Then as you listen to His voice you can participate in the work of His Word in the world. You can see eternal results from your life.

Christians apply this verse apart from the context as well. We use it to declare the power of the Word of God, meaning the text of Scripture. It can be used that way, but it seems more in line with the passage to refer to that word from the Holy Spirit when the LORD is near to turn the wicked from His ways. If we take it in that sense, God is declaring the power of His Word to transform a life from darkness to light (Ephesians 5:8), from being fruitless to fruitful. God can finish the work He started in us because His Word is powerful (Philippians 1:6).

Sometimes when I tell people of the power of God to transform their lives, they tell me I don't know how bad they've been. I tell them they don't know how powerful a Savior God is. They don't know the power of His Word to put our old nature to death and cause the resurrected life of Jesus to be seen in us (Romans 6:4).

¹² "For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Isaiah 55:12 This is the transformation that is possible if we will respond when the LORD is near. He'll turn our sorrow into joy. That is what buying wine without cost alluded to. There is joy in a life in Jesus. We will be led in peace, for we now have peace with God through the sacrifice with Jesus (Romans 5:1). How many times have you heard someone say that after they were saved the colors were brighter and everything seemed so full of life? The mountains and hills seem to burst into song. The trees seem to clap their hands, and maybe they literally will in the Millennial Kingdom.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."Isaiah 55:13

While this has been true in physical Israel, it is true in a spiritual sense for all who come to Christ. The thorns of life seem to be replaced with cypress, and the briars with myrtles. This is pointing to the curse of sin one day being lifted from the earth (Genesis 3:18) The transformation of our lives is an everlasting sign to the world of the power of God. But it all begins by coming to Jesus, the only one who can quench our thirst and satisfy our hunger. Have you responded when He called? Is He calling you this morning? Is He first in every area of your life, or are you still spending your money on what is not food, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Come!

Questions

- 1 What did chapter 54 promise us?
- 2 How can sinful man choose Jesus?
- 3 Why are our souls thirsty?
- 4 Where does Jesus apply verse 2?
- 5 What are you laboring for? Does it satisfy?
- 6 How do we receive spiritual bread?
- 7 Why is the kitchen more attractive to us?
- 8 What is the everlasting covenant offered to us?
- 9 Who is "me" in verse 3? How do you know?
- 10 How does God want you to respond to this chapter?