

Isaiah 55:1-5 (NKJV) Jan 20

¹ "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."

Remember our context. God is calling to His people in Babylon to respond to God's grace. He is promising them future relationship and fellowship and a rich reward. He has displayed His love to an unfaithful suffering wife.

Now this morning we are going to talk about hunger and thirst.

First off, what is it? This is according to Webster.

Hunger- *a : a craving or urgent need for food or a specific nutrient*

b : an uneasy sensation occasioned by the lack of food

c : a weakened condition brought about by prolonged lack of food

Thirst- *: a sensation of dryness in the mouth and throat associated with a desire for liquids also : the bodily condition (as of dehydration) that induces this sensation*

b : a desire or need to drink

Hunger and thirst both involve a longing for something we don't have but feel the need for.

Now the hunger that Isaiah is talking about isn't this physiological need. This isn't talking about a hunger for food or thirst for water. Hunger and thirst are used often in scripture to describe **human longings** and **cravings for something that will satisfy their deepest needs**. As far as I can tell these words are used interchangeably in scripture. If it talks about a thirst for God or a hunger for God, as far as I can tell it is talking about the same thing. I will use hunger as we go on, but I could use the word thirst just as easily.

There is a fact of life that anyone can see if they look for it. Every human is hungry. Humans are by nature and by birth hungry. Katrina has been spending some time at our house. Now she is usually a pretty contented baby, but she has her moments. Even at her age she can envision something she

thinks she must have, something that would make her life better, and she will do what she can to obtain that thing. Contentment isn't anyone's default position. We are born with a hunger of the soul. Think about it. Why does a toddler complain when they have a full belly and they are not in pain? It is because **they want**.

The nature of hunger is to want and not be satisfied until the want is met. This explains much of all human behavior. We are all doing this. We are all hungry creatures. And if you watch our minutes and our dollars and our words and our actions you will see our attempts to feed the hunger. Even today we are all doing this. We are pursuing those things we most feel will satisfy that craving in our souls.

Maybe we want significance, or appreciation, or to feel loved, or to have pleasure, or to be entertained. We can try to meet our hunger with millions of things. But we are doing it. Where do you fail most in your life? Find that spot and ask, **what are you hungry for?** What is driving you? Where do you feel you can't do without something? We all act according to our hunger. We all pursue that which we think will satisfy our hunger.

I read something recently that described why social media can be so destructive to kids. It becomes some sort of addiction to them. And it becomes addictive because it is being used to try to feed a hunger. Young people want to feel significant, loved, needed. And now they can measure it by "likes" on their facebook page. Those who are skilled at getting the posts with lots of likes are important. Those who are not feel that they are substandard. So they try harder. And we all know that if you do what you've always done you will get what you always got. So the harder they try the more frustrated and forlorn they get.

And this is just one example. We can see it everywhere. We see kids that will commit mass murder for the chance to have one day when they are noticed. We are all trying to feed our hunger. And just like idolatry, it will never satisfy our souls. We will continue to be hungry.

"Calvin and Hobbes discussed this one day in their comic strip. "Getting is better than having. When you *get* something, it's new and exciting. When you *have* something, you take it for granted and it's boring." "But everything you *get* turns into something you *have*."

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Where in your life are you most discontent? What sets you off most in relationships? What causes you to be irritated or offended or hurt or puts you into self pity or sadness? Look at it closely and you are likely to see your

hunger. We feel that we need to have that hunger met, and when it doesn't we choose the reaction that our personalities are most prone to do.

Hunger and thirst.

Now, have you ever been hungry, but you don't really know what you are hungry for? As kids, who of us has not eaten or drank something until it made us absolutely sick. I used to drink eggnog. And when we first got it I would always drink it until I was sick. Then eventually I figured it out and stopped with just a very small glass.

Most of us can look at things in our lives that were like this. We were hungry for something to fill our soul. We were hungry for something that fulfill a craving. So we pursued it over and over and over again. And it never worked. We continued to be hungry. We continued with the same gnawing need in our soul. The problem is, **we didn't know what we were really hungry for.**

Right there is our problem. We don't know instinctively what we are hungry for. We don't know what will fill us so we no longer are driven to meet that need that is driving us. This morning's text will address that.

1 "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.

The word for Ho here carries with it several notions. It is a word used to get someone's attention, but it carries with it a tone of pity. The imagery here may well be **a water vendor** going through town selling his water. Water was a very needed commodity and it was not in rampant supply like we are used to. Getting water every day was a chore that needed accomplished.

The word was also used by someone about to dispense some much needed wisdom. So we could easily take this as being both at the same time. He with the water is also dispensing a great nugget of truth. And he wants all to hear it.

Ho. This is wonderful in that it is **calling out to everyone who can hear his voice.** He is going through the market place to any who will respond. Does that look familiar. That is the same approach Jesus told us to take toward evangelism.

Now look at the words here in verse 1. Look at the emphasis on the word **"come"**. What a wonderful invitation this is. It reflects the Love of God so clearly to us. We are all being called into relationship. We are all being called to the only thing that will ever satisfy the deepest hunger of our souls. The way is not impeded with roadblocks. It is as easy as standing up and moving to the water vendor. It is as easy as saying to the Holy Spirit tugging at our heart, Yes Lord. I am tired of trying to meet my own needs. I am tired to

stubbornly doing things my way. I am tired of kicking against the goads. I am tired of my own excuses and faithless reasoning. I come. Here I am. You can have all of me.

That is the step to removing the hunger. We must come willingly to Christ. We must, like the prodigal son, leave the pig pens and go to our Father. Now we need to understand something here. Come is not a complacent word. When we were training our kids, we aimed to have them obey simple commands by the time they were three. We called that period dog training. That was not inferring that we regarded our children as dogs. But we believed that since our children were smarter than dogs, they should be trained at least **as well as a dog** before they were three. They should know simple commands and respond to them quickly. They should know things like quiet, stop, no, still, and come. Now when we said the word come, we did not mean that they should **stay where they were** and longingly look at us. We did not expect that they should sentimentally regard us from a distance. When we said **come** we expected that they would move their little behinds from where **they** were to where **we** were. And nothing short of that would satisfy us. We tried to never say it twice, but I am sure we sometimes failed in that regard. My point is that come means **intentional movement**. It is not an emotional word. It is a **compelling** word. It is a word that demands specific movement. If you are dealing with a hunger issue this morning and the hunger has moved you away from Christ instead of toward Him, Christ is **inviting** you to come. And that is wonderful. But He is also **commanding** you to come, and that is not as wonderful if you are trying to play games with your sin. If the Holy Spirit has identified a hunger issue this morning, do this. Write down the time that you will intentionally do business with Christ this afternoon. Write down the time that you will come and do business with Him. Don't think your soul will somehow drift to Christ any more than our kids behinds would drift to their parents. You must intentionally move, intentionally pray, intentionally confess, intentionally commit. Come is that kind of word.

Now look more at our text.

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.

Now, what is logically necessary if someone is to come and get food and drink from you? You must be the source of food and drink.

Let's look at what the New Testament says about this.

John 6:35 (NKJV)

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

John 4:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." ¹⁵ The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

Do we see this? Jesus is claiming to be **that thing** that our souls crave. He claims to be the fulfilling of our deep spiritual longing. He is the filling for the God shaped vacuum. Basically the point is **if we come to Christ we won't need to go anywhere else**. Oh we are not good people. So we will stray like sheep. We will get fixated on the next piece of green grass that isn't ours. I liked Sharon's post this week. **Sometimes the grass is greener on the other side because it is fake**. In a sense it is all fake. It isn't what we need. We will allow our hunger and thirst to be misdirected, as if eating dirt will somehow give us the same satisfaction as eating steak. Look how boldly Christ promises what He promises.

He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

Now let's look at what coming to Christ really means. Again we can look at the verse we just read and our text.

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.

Jesus said, He who believes in Me shall never thirst. He also said He who comes to me will not thirst. How do we come to Christ? We come by **believing** in Christ. By **having faith** in Christ. By **exercising faith** in what Christ says over what our perceptions say.

What else do we see. Verse 2 in our text says Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good. The **listening is the coming**. We come to Christ by listening to the words of Christ. And not just hearing them but believing them and doing them.

Then in verse 3. **Incline your ear and come to Me. Hear and your soul shall live.** Again the coming is **in the hearing.** It is in the inclining ones ear to what God has to say and being fully attentive to what He says. The only major beef I have with our discipleship booklets is that over and over again we are told to listen to God in prayer. I am all for being attentive to God's will and God's spirit. And I would never say that God cannot grant Divine Guidance while we are praying to Him. But if I wrote my kids a set of instructions of things to do while I am away, I would not want to see them sitting around clueless because they were **waiting for the phone** to ring so I could **tell them** what to do. We do better to **do those things that God has clearly communicated for us to do** and be **fully absorbed** in those things than to think that **our spiritual duty is to wait for our perception phone to ring with a fresh set of instructions.** It is never a substandard Christian life to devote oneself to obeying what God has clearly commanded us to do and applying the truths that He has revealed through His Word.

We come by listening to what God has already said. We come by obeying what God has clearly communicated. We come by pouring our soul out to God based upon what our Word has already told us about Him. That is enough. If God chooses to give us more, that is the gravy. That is icing. But it is not our mainstay. The spiritual hot line doesn't have to ring for us to live a rich and pleasing spiritual life. The Holy Spirit has enabled that through the word of God.

We come to Christ by coming to His word obediently and expectantly and praying to Christ faithfully.

And He declares that He is our soul's satisfaction. He is all we need. He is that for which our soul legitimately craves. Everything else is sin's deceptive whisper.

Now back to verse 1. What do you not need when coming to Christ? What do you not need in order to obtain what your soul most deeply needs?

Money. Well, that is good news. But in this sense it goes even further than that. We do not need our own resources to get from God that which we most need. In fact, we **cannot buy** what our soul needs with our own resources. It is odd to me that it even uses the word "**buy**". This would be like going to Naylor's and picking out a pair of boots. Then we go up to the counter and say I would like to buy these. And the lady at the counter says, well they are \$50. And we say, no I don't have any money. But I want to buy them. So the lady pulls \$50 out of the cash register, hands it to you, you hand it back to her, and she says "sold". Now would we really call that buying? That is how we buy food and drink from Jesus. That is how we obtain what our soul hungers for.

Christ has already paid for it all. We get everything we get on the virtue of the price He has already dished out. Just like Eph 2:8 says, **not by works lest anyone should boast**. We don't have the resources to purchase what we need.

Have you ever noticed that when you go to the world to get what your soul needs, they are very happy to take something from you. There is always a price tag for something you want. But with Christ, your money is no good with Him.

Notice too what we are to buy with no money. Waters, wine and milk. These were all the common mainstays in that region. But it was more than just water for one's thirst. We have wine for ones enjoyment and milk for ones sustenance. God truly has what we need and He will surely give it to us if we will come to Him. We won't find **just life**. We will find **abundant life** in Christ.

Now back to verse 2 and 3. We already looked at this to define what it means to come to Christ. Now lets glean a little more from it.

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.

Tomorrow we will get up and we will spend our resources, our time, our energy and our money on things. Some of those things we have determined are our responsibilities before God. Some of us will go to our jobs. Some will work in our homes. But we will all spend something to get something. The question is what are we trying to get? Is there anything we are pursuing because **our souls are not happy and we want them to be**? Is there anything we are chasing because we have a hunger in our souls for something we think the world can give us? Is there some way that we think this world can satisfy a craving we have? That is what this is talking about. Remember there are only 2 things to worship? **There is God and everything else**. Well there are only 2 places to buy from. **God and everywhere else**.

The lament here is that God's people are chasing things to make them happy apart from God and those things will not make them happy. They will not satisfy the hunger.

What is something that you really longed for? You just felt if you could have that thing, you would be happy. Then after a year, how happy did that thing make you? Things of this world are always a disappointment. They are fleeting. When I go charter fishing in a boat, I always have a few minutes of feeling like, this is living. But it always fades. It never satisfies my soul.

So when we get up tomorrow, what will we pursue because we think it will provide something to fill a void in our soul? We have got to know by now that it is pointless. And if it is something that is against God's will, it is sin.

What points in your day can you not give thanks to God? Where can you not realize that everything that you need you already have, and thank God for it?

What points are you desperate or frantic to have something that God has not given you? Look at those points closely. There is something wrong there.

There is some **coming to Christ for our thirst** that is needed there. There is some **hearing of His word** that is needed there. If we really believe that what Christ **has** is the stuff **that satisfies our souls**, our lives will show evidence of it. Christ will be where we look and where we run to. He will be what we trust. Our lives will be full of thanks for everything we have. Because none of our life situations are driving us due to our need to **have** something or **get** something.

The question in this verse is a great one. Why do you spend such effort to get stuff that never delivers what it promises? Why do you look to sources to give you what they never give anyone?

Why do you spend money for *what is not bread*, And your wages for *what does not satisfy*?

What will we do to get people's approval? How much effort will we spend to get them to like us? How much effort will we go through to get pleasure for ourselves? How much will we spend to have experiences? And all the while, what are we hoping to accomplish? If it is not received as a gift from God's hands, if we feel we must go against Him to have it, it will not satisfy. It will not be food for our souls. It will be a waste of time and resources.

I find that the litmus test in scripture is thanksgiving. If what I am doing causes me to pause and thank God for such a wonderful thing, then it is likely done in faith. That doesn't mean we don't have room to grow in wisdom and discernment. But it is probably in faith. But if we, in any way, want to hide what we are doing from God, if we would not want to tell it to someone who loves us, it is probably sin. It is probably not of faith. And it is probably spending money for what is not bread.

Notice too in this verse that we are spending our money, money we don't need to spend in Christ's economy. We like the idea of earning something. We like thinking we have a right to it. We deserve it. We worked for it. There is pride in that. But the problem is the things **we really need** can't be gotten that way. The things that **feed our souls**, the things that **satisfy us**, must be **given to us**. We could never possibly pay for the forgiveness that Christ offers. We could

never pay for the relationship with God that Christ affords us. We could never get peace with God by our efforts.

Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is good*, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

This verse is not giving advice to eat good things. It is telling **what eating good things consists of**. He is saying that listening carefully to me **is** what eating good things is. Do we want the food that satisfies our souls? Do we want the things that satisfy the cravings of our hearts? Do we want the peace and joy that are promised in the Christian life? Do we want free of the strife and worry and dissatisfaction and disillusionment of day to day life?

Look at your life this morning. Do your days look like the days of someone who has found the real bread of heaven. Does your life look like the life of someone who believes you already have the most important things that can be obtained in life? Do you lack the restlessness of the world, the world that feels the need to chase something in order to meet one of those cravings of the soul? Or are you content because you know **you have what your soul needs**? Do you find your heart **breaking out in praise** because Christ has bought for you the eternal bread and water? Do you thank God in all that you do because you know you need nothing more?

If you see areas of your life where you cannot really say you are content, then follow the advice Isaiah gives us. Listen carefully to Christ. Bring all your decisions before Him. Look at the principles in scripture and prayerfully ask the Lord to lead you into that **which would be most pleasing to Him**. I know I make too many decisions based on the idea that what I am doing isn't a sin. At least it is not outside of what God allows. And the decision might even be by faith. But it may not be God's best. It may not be that bread and water He desires me to have. I may rob myself of His best by not actively bringing the decision making to Him.

I was talking to someone lately and I was talking about work. I said the best path is, if you have questions about **what you should do** ask your authority what he **wants** you to do.

This person laughed and said, no. If I do that then I will know and I will have to do it.

I thought that statement was too honest for how we often deal with God. In our heart of hearts do we really want to submit every decision to God? Do we want to do the things that most tightly comply to God's intent? Do we want to **know** what He wants because we love Him and want **to do** what He wants? That is the kind of coming that this passage is talking about. That is receiving the best from Him. But it is hard. It is hard to trust Him that much. It is hard

to come to Him with a truly open hand, only wanting to know what will please Him most so we can do it. It is hard to believe that **this is where the best bread is**. This is **where the best water is**. This is where **our life best lived is**. And that is where we can **let your soul delight itself in abundance**. You know, we never reach that point when we hold back. When we tell God what **we will do** and **what we won't do**. When we set limits on what we will trust God with in our lives. The abundance is in God's word having absolute sway on our lives, when our agenda becomes God's agenda. And our plans sway with the whim and will of God. And what will be the result of this kind of living?

Matthew 5:6 (NKJV)

⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Do you want to be filled, or fulfilled with and by God? Come to Him this morning and this week and this lifetime.