

Free Water for All Who Thirst

The Gospel in Isaiah

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Bible Text: Isaiah 55

Preached on: Sunday May 6, 2007

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Recently we looked at the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 53 and I commented to you that this particular chapter was one that gave a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ written 700 years before the time of his coming. Another very beautiful picture of God's marvelous salvation plan is found in this chapter—Isaiah chapter 55.

I have never been a businessman in my life, but, you know, if I had a grocery store, probably the last verse in the Bible that I would want as the keynote verse over the door to my store would be verse number one of Isaiah chapter 55. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”¹

My experience is when I go to the grocery store I pay a lot of money. Do you notice that? That is our experience. And the last thing that I would want would be to offer, “Just come and take it. Come and receive it.” That would be nice, but, you know, that's something that is not offered to us.

God here is speaking about the wonderful and marvelous plan that he has for our lives, that that which sustains our lives spiritually, that which spiritually can be pictured as wine and milk is given to us without money and without price.

You remember that when the Lord Jesus was speaking to the lady at the well in John chapter four we read these words. Jesus said, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”² And then he goes on a little later and says, “Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.”³

God says that that which is most valuable in our lives, that which gives to us the incredible and marvellous blessing that we can only receive from God is that which we receive from him without cost. The gospel of Jesus Christ is that salvation, though very

¹ Isaiah 55:1

² John 4:10

³ John 4:13-14

costly, cost the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, his death on the cross of Calvary for us is without cost. We turn to him in faith believing and we are assured that the gift that we will receive is eternal life.

It is interesting that the world does not view things that way. Isaiah goes on to say in the second verse, “Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy?”⁴ You see, the world is attempting to receive a proper relationship with God by way of earning it, by way of spending something for it hoping that some day if they have been good enough, if they have lived their lives according to what they consider to be a good standard of life, that somehow God will understand and God will bless them, forgive them and give them everlasting life.

Every religion except evangelical Christianity teaches that we earn our salvation, that salvation is based on what we do, what we accomplish, our living up to certain standards. But the Word of God tells us that it is without money and without price.

God goes on to explain this to us where he says in the third verse, “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.”⁵

I wonder why David is mentioned here. God tells us that he is going to make for us an everlasting covenant. I believe he is talking here about the new covenant, that covenant that he made that will give to us eternal life. But it says it is a covenant that is, “According to the faithful mercies shown to David.”⁶ What in the world does David have to do with this?

David had been dead and buried by the time that Isaiah was speaking. What does David have to do with this special relationship that we will have with God?

It is interesting that there is a prediction in the Old Testament that David will rule over his people. Listen to this in Ezekiel chapter 34 and verse 23.

Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.⁷

What in the world did Ezekiel have in mind? Certainly he was not thinking that David, who had died and was buried, was someday going to be a leader and a ruler over God’s people. That is not what he was referring to here. But when we get to the New Testament we do have a clear understanding of this because in the first verse of the entire New Testament we read, “The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David,

⁴ Isaiah 55:2

⁵ Isaiah 55:3

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ezekiel 34:23-24

the son of Abraham.”⁸ This one who was to come, the Lord Jesus Christ, was to be the descendant of David. He is the greater David, the one who would be the ruler, commander over God’s people. What a wonderful thought that we have one today who is the David predicted in this wonderful verse, that he is the ruler over his people.

And listen to the way it is described. It says in verse four. “Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, A leader and commander for the peoples.”⁹

When you think of this, he is certainly the leader. He is our leader. He is my leader. It is for me to determine his will and to do that will and as I do it I know that I am fulfilling the will of God as I obey what the Lord Jesus Christ has told me to do. But it goes beyond this. It says that he would be not only a leader, but a commander to the people.

I had the joy, as you know, of spending many years in the military and I know what it is like to have a commander. And I know that most of the commanders that I worked for were very fine people and when an order was given, the correct response is very, very simple. It is, yes, sir. We don’t say to a commander, “Well, you know, I am going to sit down and think about that. Well, you know, I am going to discuss that with my friends and I will make a decision as to whether I am going to do what you tell me to do.”

No. When the commander says, “Do this,” you jump and you do it. The only appropriate answer is, “When, sir? When do you want it done?”

And so when Jesus is called our leader and commander, the Word of God is making it abundantly clear that we, as his children, are to be obedient to all of his commands. We turn in the Word of God and we read and he says, “This is what we are to do,” there is no questioning it. We are not to ask ourselves, “Well, let me see. I think I ought to sit down and discuss this one and make a decision about whether I should be obedient.” No, he is the commander. The only response is, “Yes, sir.” We do it. And we obey what he tells us to do.

Well, how is it, then, according to this Scripture, that one becomes a child of God, has a proper relationship with the Lord? Oh, it tells us in verse three of our passage, “Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, According to the faithful mercies shown to David.”¹⁰ We read that.

And then he goes on to say in verse six:

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;
And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him,
And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.¹¹

⁸ Mathew 1:1

⁹ Isaiah 55:4

¹⁰ Isaiah 55:3

¹¹ Isaiah 55:6-7

What is he saying to us here? He says, first of all, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.”¹²

Do you know, implied in those words is the thought that he will not always be there to be found and he will not always be near. There is a diving line. And that dividing line is the line of death. If any one of us reaches the point of death and has not trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord, that person has no further opportunity.

God says, “Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.”¹³ If you who are listening to my voice do not know the Savior, it is imperative that you trust in him now, not wait and say, “Oh, some day I will do it.” That day may never be yours. It is for us to trust in him now.

And it goes on and describes exactly what it is that we must do. “Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts.”¹⁴ That is what we call repentance, forsaking that sinful life that is ours.

And then it goes on to say, “And let him return to the LORD.”¹⁵ You see, repentance is the first side of the coin. The second is what we call faith. Turning from our sin and turning to him in faith believing. He gives us an incredible promise. The promise is. “And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”¹⁶

What a thought. He doesn't say that if we turn to God possibly he will have compassion on us. It is a promise. It is a commitment. God says, “If you turn to me, I will have compassion. I will abundantly pardon.”

When I think about this I think about how great and glorious is the love of God and how wonderful it is for us to know that he in his incredible mercy has provided a way that we, though sinful, can be assured that we will have everlasting life.

Well, as we said before, this is not the way the world thinks. The world thinks in terms of earning salvation. Look at any religion other than evangelical Christianity and you find that there is a way that they teach that we are to earn our salvation.

But God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts. And that is what he tells us. He says in verse eight,

¹² Isaiah 55:6

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Isaiah 55:7

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.¹⁷

What a wonderful thing that God has a plan and that plan goes way beyond our conception of what we think ought to be. He has a plan that provides for us eternal life, not according to what we would think, earning it, doing something to gain it, but as a free abundant and wonderful gift from him.

He describes this for us in terms of a picture that we would understand. We have been waiting for rain to come and today it rained. Wasn't that nice? You know, we have needed the rain. And this is the picture that he gives to us here in Isaiah chapter 55. He says beginning with verse 10, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be."¹⁸

He is giving us a description.

I lived up in the north where it snows. We don't get any snow down here in Savannah, Georgia. But I have lived where snow comes down throughout the winter. I can remember as a young child walking a mile to school with boots on through the snow. Many of you who are from the North can remember experiences like that. And, of course, we here enjoy the rain as it waters the ground.

God says that this is a picture of his Word going forth. He said, "So shall my word be..."¹⁹ Just like the rain and the snow that comes down and does its job and waters the earth and makes sure that there is food for those who want to eat, he says, "So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."²⁰ This is a message of great importance to us today that the Word of God as it goes out from this place, as we speak it to those around us, as we share that Word to people who are our friends and co workers and fellow students wherever it might be... we can be assured of one thing, that that Word will accomplish the goal of God.

He tells us in Matthew 24, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away."²¹ His words are eternal and they are there for us and for us to send out and spread to others. In fact, for us to exercise faith and to come to know the Savior, the Word of God tells us in Romans chapter 10 that "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."²²

¹⁷ Isaiah 55:8-9

¹⁸ Isaiah 55:10-11

¹⁹ Isaiah 55:11

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Matthew 24:35

²² Romans 10:17

That Word is that which will engender faith in our hearts and that Word is that which will lead us to trust and believe that we might have everlasting life. And so Jesus has sent us out to be the messengers, the ones who will spread that Word of God and spread that Word of God with a sense of confidence that we know it will accomplish its goal.

In Matthew chapter 28 he says to his disciples:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.²³

What a commission he has given to us. And some may ask, “Well, sometimes I go out and I share the Word of God and it doesn’t seem as if a whole lot happens. I spread the Word. I tell people. Oh, and from time to time I find someone who believes, but so many turn away from God’s Word.”

Jesus makes it abundantly clear to us that his Word will accomplish exactly what he sent it forth to do. In John chapter 10 he was having a dialogue with a group of people in his day. It was the time of the feast of the dedication, the feast that we call Chanukah today and he was in Jerusalem. And it says in verse 23:

It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly."²⁴

He had just discussed with them the fact that he was the great shepherd and there were a multitude of sheep out there. And he goes on to say:

I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep.²⁵

You know, elsewhere he describes a separation between the sheep and the goats. There are the sheep who are God’s people, who are the ones who trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and the goats who do not. He says, “You are not my sheep. That is why you are not believing.” And then he explains to them that those who are the sheep of God will hear and will understand.

Listen to his words. He says:

²³ Mathew 28:18-20

²⁴ John 10:23-24

²⁵ John 10:25-26

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.²⁶

What is he saying here? He is saying there are a group of people. He calls them his sheep. They belong to the Father eternally. They are the elect of God. They have been given to the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the Word of God goes forth as Jesus proclaimed it, as we proclaim it today, the sheep will hear his voice and they will believe and they will turn to him. And according to what we read in this wonderful passage in Isaiah chapter 55 his Word will not return void but it will accomplish that for which he sent it.²⁷

In other words, every one of the blood bought children of God will hear the Word of God, will believe, will trust in him and will have eternal life. What a blessing that God gives to us that as we go out and proclaim God's Word we don't have to worry about whether our witness is going to accomplish its goal. We have to be faithful in proclaiming it. God does the work of converting the soul and God will accomplish his will.

There is a beautiful picture that he gives to us immediately after that in the remainder of this chapter, Isaiah chapter 55. He says this and it is a beautiful picture of what it is to be a believer in Jesus Christ.

He said, "For you will go out with joy And be led forth with peace."²⁸ Does that describe your life? If you are a believer in Jesus Christ it should. There should be joy in your heart and peace in your heart because God has blessed you that we as his children can know that there is not one thing that could come upon us, there is not one thing that could come into our lives that can destroy the joy and the peace that he gives to us as believers in Jesus Christ.

You know what? I think about this. The absolute worse thing in human terms that can ever happen to a human being is that that person will die. Well, to the person who is a believer, death just means a transition from here to being in the presence of the Savior. What a wonderful thought that even the worst experience that we can have in life leads to the greatest joy. God says that, "you will go out with joy And be led forth with peace."²⁹

And then he gives a very beautiful picture here. He says, "The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands."³⁰

²⁶ John 10:27-30

²⁷ See Isaiah 55:11

²⁸ Isaiah 55:12

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Now I am not expecting to see trees literally clapping their hands. It is a picture, but it is a picture of all nature rejoicing in the wonders of God's glorious salvation, in the wonders of the work of God in bringing men and women to faith in Jesus Christ. What a beautiful picture he gives to us.

And then he describes our conversion in terms of the dramatic change that takes place in our lives. He says in verse 13—and listen to these beautiful words—“Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up.”³¹

You know, I don't particularly like a thorn bush. I don't like a nettle. I mean these things are grotesque that we would tear out and throw away. They are useless. But God says, “Instead of that which is useless and has little value,” he says to us, “Something beautiful like the cypress and the myrtle tree will come up in its place,” a picture of the dramatic change that takes place in the life of a believer in Jesus Christ, that we were once useless in the sight of God's purpose. We were once useless, turning away from him and living a life of sin. But God in his wonderful and matchless grace has changed us so that instead of just being a thorn tree, we are among the most beautiful trees in creation, that God has made us to be beautiful, useful and significant in his sight.

And there is something even beyond that. It says, “And it will be a memorial to the LORD, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”³² In other words, this is something that will last forever, that when we have come to a relationship with Jesus Christ, it is a relationship that is not for a day or a week or a month or a year. It is forever. It is a memorial, an everlasting sign that will not be cut off. By God's wonderful grace, every one of the blood bought sheep of God coming to know him, coming to experience the joy of a relationship with him can be assured that that light will be forever.

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.”³³

I ask you, my friends, have you come to know the Savior? If you know him, if you are among the sheep of God, you can rejoice in the matchless joy of being in a relationship with the eternal God.

If you don't know him, I challenge you to come to him even now.

And for those of us who are his, what a wonderful thought. When we go out and share the message with others we know that the Word of God will accomplish the goal for which the Lord sends it out, that the sheep of God will hear and believe and that men and women will come to know him as Savior and Lord.

³¹ Isaiah 55:13

³² Ibid.

³³ John 10:28

Let us pray together.

Our Father, we thank you for your Word. It is truly a light to our feet. It is a blessing to know the great truths that you teach us and I ask, our Father, that you might help us to know him even better whom to know is life everlasting. If anyone who hears these words knows not the Savior, may this one come to know him even now? And for those of us who are yours, may we go out with joy and proclaim the Word, knowing that that Word, your Word, will accomplish its goal. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.