

Powerful Prophecies of the Major Prophets God's Great Invitation (Isaiah 55)

Intro: In reading the prophets we often encounter passages that speak of divine judgment and retribution. Yet we should not overlook those texts that offer great promise to God's people. The apostles of the NT often cited some of the great salvation texts of the major prophets. Let's consider one together tonight—Isaiah 55.

Though it was Isaiah's lot to declare to Israel and Judah their sin and the resulting captivity of both, he also was given a message of deliverance for their future. They would return from captivity. Their kingdom would be restored when the Messiah came; and His coming would bring a great deliverance or salvation to His people. It is as if Isaiah writes to those of a future time with the good news of salvation and invites them to experience its blessings. Isaiah 55 is...

God's great invitation to salvation

It is an invitation to true satisfaction.

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters; And you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk Without money and without cost. "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 delight yourself in abundance." (Isaiah 55:1–2) God invites us to experience a wholesome spiritual satisfaction.

Clearly Isaiah is not merely thinking of literal water, wine, and milk; but he uses them as symbols of the spiritual nourishment that only God can give.

It is freely offered by God's grace. This spiritual food is free to those who will come to God and seek Him.

It is available to the poorest person. Even those without money can "buy" this nourishing drink. Since it is freely given it can only be "bought" through responding to God's offer through "listening" to Him or as will be said later "seeking" and "turning" to Him.

It is an abundant provision. It stands in contrast to meager spiritual diet of idolatry or materialism that cannot satisfy the soul. Only God can provide that which truly satisfies the soul; yet people often seek to fill their spirits with earthly things that are not bread and that cannot satisfy—things like pleasure, entertainment, fame, and material possessions.

It is an invitation to enter a new covenant with the Lord.

"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. "Behold, I have made him a witness to the peoples, A leader and commander for the peoples. "Behold, you will call a nation you do not know, And a nation which knows you not will

run to you, Because of the LORD your God, even the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you.”” (Isaiah 55:3–5)

Because Israel had rejected God’s covenant and experienced the retribution of rejecting it, God invites them to enter a “new covenant” with Him. It is a covenant of life.

It is motivated by the same covenant faithfulness or “mercy” God had shown to David in his promise of His unfailing love and an everlasting dynasty.

And just as the Lord made David a witness to the peoples, a leader and a commander, so God’s people will experience a similar influence among the nations. Gentiles would be drawn to Israel for the sake of the Lord’s blessing upon them.

It is an invitation to God’s gracious forgiveness.

“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.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither 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.” (Isaiah 55:6–9)

God’s forgiveness is conditioned upon turning to the Lord in repentance. Using the standard language of the OT, the prophet urges God’s people to “seek Him and call upon Him. That of course involves one leaving a life of sin and turning his will to the will of the Lord. It is full forgiveness that based on God’s compassion.

It is grounded in God’s lofty and superior thoughts. He thinks and does that which humans in their limited insight could not imagine or think. I agree with the idea that is often derived from this text that we should humble ourselves before God and not imagine that we are capable of thinking at his level about anything; and thus we should be content to hear and obey Him. But in this context God is saying that what He intends for His people is far above anything they might have imagined.

It is an invitation to everlasting joy and peace

“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 shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it. “For you will go out with joy, And be led forth with peace; 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. “Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up; And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up; And it will be a memorial to the LORD, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.”” (Isaiah 55:10–13)

The blessing of everlasting joy and peace is made certain by the assurance of God's word.

Through the years this verse has comforted those who are discouraged in teaching the word. The idea is suggested that God's word is never spoken in vain, that it accomplishes what it was intended to do. But in this context it seems the logic goes in a slightly different direction.

When God speaks His word, it is as good as done. After the flood God gave His solemn promise that the cycles of nature would not be interrupted again by a universal flood and that seedtime and harvest would continue to furnish food for the earth. In just the same way, God's word will bring forth the expected harvest or yield in the fulfillment of His purpose. In this case the expected purpose is explained in the verses that follow, namely, the joyous return of Israel to Mt. Zion. It is the result of divine transformation.

In a vivid figure of speech Israel is portrayed as returning to Zion and as they make their way home, the mountains and hills shout joyously and the trees joyfully clap their "hands."

Obviously this is highly figurative language or metaphor.

Mountains don't have mouths to shout; and trees do not have hands to clap. But the figure is designed to suggest a joyous journey. And when they reach their destination they will not have to worry about thorns and nettles, but rather the land itself will bear myrtle and cypress trees. There would be a reversal of what had come upon the land because of Israel's sin (cf. Isaiah). Moreover it would suggest the removal of the curse that came because of sin and the restoration of Eden-like conditions.

It is a permanent condition.

The changed conditions of the new order would serve to remind God of His promise and in so doing ensure its permanent continuance.

What a great and beautiful invitation God prophetically issued to His people! But how would it find its fulfillment?

God's great invitation of salvation is fulfilled in Jesus.

He invites us to a life of true satisfaction.

He appropriates the language of Isaiah to issue an invitation to a spiritual feast.

"Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (John 6:35)

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit,

whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37–39)

“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

That satisfaction is not earned by merit, but given by God’s grace. It is available to all--to those who recognize that they have nothing to offer, but who are poor in spirit. It meets every spiritual need we have and results in abundant life!

It is not hard here to think of the Beatitudes of Jesus. Blessed are the poor in spirit...blessed are they that mourn...blessed are the meek...blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness.

He invites us to enter a new covenant of forgiveness.

Jesus in the institution of the Lord’s Supper showed that His blood would be sacrifice that inaugurates a new covenant of forgiveness.

“for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)

Paul shows that Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant by his death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. Because He is the living Lord, He can give to His people the “sure mercies shown to David.”

Paul in fact quotes Isaiah 55 in his synagogue sermon at Antioch of Psidia and makes this very point:

“And as for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no more to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: ‘I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.’” (Acts 13:34)

The Hebrew writer tells us that Jesus is the mediator of that great covenant with the promise of merciful forgiveness for the sinner.

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.” (Hebrews 8:6)

He invites us to a life of everlasting joy and peace.

Truly the life of the believer in Jesus is a life of joy and peace. The NT makes it clear that both are fruit of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,” (Galatians 5:22)

But this is only a foretaste of the joy and peace of the New Jerusalem where the promised Edenic conditions of Isaiah’s prophecy find their ultimate fulfillment. Paul wrote about the destiny of those who face the Lord on judgment at the last day:

“There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 2:9–10)

And John describes the blessings of the New Jerusalem this way:

“And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him;” (Revelation 22:3)

“and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”” (Revelation 21:4)

In heaven we'll enjoy the total fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy of everlasting joy and peace.

He invites us to receive his gracious forgiveness.

Who could have imagined that a God so holy would reach down and save sinners so unworthy? This is the ultimate expression of how great God's thoughts are over our own! He did what humans would have considered unthinkable!

“For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:7–8)

After describing the despicable condition of the sinner in Titus 3 Paul affirms how God graciously saved them:

“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:4–7)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

And who could imagine that God would make sinners members of His family and give them an eternal inheritance. Indeed as Paul wrote:

“but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.”” (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Conclusion: All that Isaiah prophesied is offered by Jesus in His great invitations.

“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. “Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. “For My yoke is easy, and My load is light.”” (Matthew 11:28–30)

“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.” (Revelation 22:17)

Indeed we could ask the people of our world, “Why do you spend your money for what is not bread, and your wages on what does not satisfy!” Isn't there a better way?!

Through Jesus God offers us a life of true satisfaction, a new covenant of mercy that enables us to influence others, a full and complete forgiveness of sins through the blood of His Son, and the opportunity to experience

everlasting joy and peace in the New Jerusalem. And all of it freely given by His grace!