

PM Isaiah 55 Come, everyone who thirsts

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Preacher: Rev Robert Dale

[0 : 00] speak on just the opening verses of this chapter, but it's a beautiful and a powerful chapter, so we'll read the whole of it now. Isaiah 55.

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. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

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.

[1 : 36]

Come up the cypress. Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle, and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Now we turn over to the New Testament, and to John chapter 7, just a few verses here, where Jesus quotes from Isaiah 55.

And we're reading just verses 37 down to 44. John chapter 7, verse 37. On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

Now this he said about the spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.

[4 : 23] For as yet the spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. When they heard these words, some of the people said, This really is the prophet.

Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Is the Christ to come from Galilee? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?

So there was a division among the people over them. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him. Well may God speak to us through those portions of his word.

Let's sing again. Well let's turn now to the word of God and to Isaiah chapter 55.

There are many wonderful things in this chapter, but I want to focus just on verses 1 to 3.

[5 : 51] You may recall that I began a month or so, a series of sermons on the great invitations of scripture. Well here is one of the most famous.

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. 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. 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.

When I was a boy growing up in North London, I often used to go to Edmonton Green Market.

[7 : 05] Nowadays it's a huge car park surrounded by supermarkets, but in those days there were hundreds of small shops, butchers and bakers and fishmongers and ironmongers and so on.

Together with about 50 stools in the centre of the green. Mainly selling fruit and veg, but also there were clothes stools and there were jewellery stools, and best of all, perhaps, there were sweet stools.

It was all very noisy, with the traders shouting out their wares. Here you go, best bananas, sixpence a pound.

Come on, you won't get them cheaper than that anywhere. My dad actually worked on the market when he was a boy, back in the 1930s.

And he often used to say to me that he learnt everything that he knew about economics from Edmonton Green Market. He used to sell tomatoes.

[8 : 17] And apparently back in the 1930s, they used to start out at one shilling and one old penny for the pound of tomatoes at the beginning of the day.

And then as the day progressed, depending on demand, the price would go up or down. And at the end of the day, just to get rid of them, my dad used to tell me he would sell them for threepence, or fourpence a pound.

Our son Jonathan worked for a short while in Morrison's in Lincoln. And the same thing used to happen there.

No street traders crying out, but there were people going around changing all the labels on the food. Still happens now. If you go there late in the evening, then you get some amazing bargains.

Well, here in Isaiah 55, you have a market scene.

[9 : 22] But here, something very unusual is happening. A new trader has appeared on the scene.

And he is offering his goods for free. You can imagine the other traders all just stopping and looking up and wondering whatever is going on.

It isn't even the end of the day. It's not as if he is trying to get rid of his goods. He is simply offering the very best for absolutely nothing.

And he is none too complimentary about the other traders either. He dismisses their goods as worthless.

So what's going on here? Well, the trader is, of course, the Lord himself.

[10 : 32] Our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the Gospel. In the chapters leading up to this, Isaiah has been giving us many prophecies about the Messiah.

including the so-called servant songs, culminating in Isaiah 53, in the so-called suffering servant. He has told us how the Lord would die to save multitudes, dying for our sins, and rising again. And now he's talking about the fruits of that. Chapter 54, he speaks about the glory of Christ's kingdom.

And now in chapter 55, Christ himself is speaking to us, inviting us to come into his kingdom. Five times in our ESV translation, he repeats the word come. Four times in quick succession in verse 1, and then again in verse 3.

[11 : 50] Come to me, Christ is saying here, and I will give you everything that your soul needs. Our Lord Jesus Christ surely has this passage in mind in John 7.

There, as we read earlier, on the last day of the feast, the feast of tabernacles, the so-called great day, Jesus stood up in the temple and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Virtually quoting Isaiah 55 and applying it to himself. One of the ceremonies of the feast of tabernacles was actually a pouring out of water on the altar.

It was said to represent the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which was promised in the Old Testament in Joel chapter 2. Hence, perhaps, John's explanation that Jesus spoke of the Spirit.

It's rather striking in John 7 that it was after he had said this that people began to question, could this possibly be the Christ, in other words, the Messiah?

[13 : 21] They knew that he was quoting a messianic promise. And their only hesitation was a perfectly fair biblical question as to where he was born.

They knew that the Messiah had to be born of the seed of David and had to come from the city of David, that is Bethlehem, that was written in Scripture in Micah chapter 5.

And yet, this Jesus comes from Galilee. It didn't stack up. If only they knew that he really was born in Bethlehem.

He really was and is the Messiah. Well, I want us to look at this glorious invitation in Isaiah 55.

And we'll do so under three headings. The free offer of the gospel in verse 1. The foolish choice of the world in verse 2.

[14 : 28] And the feast that God has in store for us in verse 3. First, the free offer of the gospel.

Verse 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.

Four times in this verse in the ESV translation we have the word come. The first time, to be fair, it is actually a different word in the Hebrew.

The word hoy. Which as you can imagine is simply a call for attention. The AV translates it simply as ho. But in the context I think come is a perfectly good translation.

The other three times it's the same Hebrew word yalak meaning to walk. Now that implies a change of position.

[15:41] Leave the place where you are and come and walk over to me. That at its very simplest level is what the Lord is saying.

That straight away underlines for us that the gospel requires change in our lives. You can't remain where you are in the world.

You must come to Christ and that will change your life. In terms of the market illustration you can't stay over there at the other market traders stores.

There's nothing on offer over there. if you want salvation you must leave them and come over here to the Lord's market store where he has everything.

Come to Christ and he will make it worthwhile for you. Let's look at what he offers. first there's water.

[16:47] Come everyone who thirsts come to the waters. That's the promise of course that Jesus takes up in John chapter 7. If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink.

Water is a symbol of spiritual life and drinking is a symbol of receiving that life. You'll find that image in many places in scripture.

Just to choose a few almost at random. Psalm 23 he leads me beside the still waters. What are the sheep going to do by the waters?

What are they going to drink? Psalm 42 my soul thirsts for God for the living God. My soul is parched.

I need God. Let me come to him. Isaiah 12 with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

[17:53] Isaiah 35 the burning sand shall become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water.

You have it in John chapter 4 where Jesus meets that woman from Samaria woman by the well.

He says to her if you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you give me a drink you would have asked of him and he would have given you living water.

John 7 obviously let him come to me and drink. Revelation 7 also the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water.

Revelation 22 the last promise of the Bible let him who is thirsty come and let him take of the water of life freely.

Well here in Isaiah you have an open invitation to everyone who is thirsty. That's the only qualification required that you are thirsty.

[19:04] Other than that anyone can come Jews or Gentiles male or female rich or poor old or young not sure who is the oldest one in the congregation Jack probably the youngest one I suppose hasn't quite yet been born still inside Juliana not quite ready to hear the gospel just yet but soon will be that open invitation is to everyone from one end of the spectrum to the other to the children here tonight to the adults that same gospel goes out come to the waters and drink the question is of course are you thirsty thirsty I think there are many people in the world who are thirsty for something but they don't know what they want something more than the world can offer them and yet they find it hard to accept that what they need is Christ and so they look for water elsewhere and they fail to find it he alone can give you the living water if you are not yet converted you need to drink of that living stream of water which is

Christ you need to drink urgently because otherwise you will die of thirst it is a wilderness out there it is a desert and there is water nowhere else come to Christ and drink and if you are converted you need to keep on drinking I don't suppose any of us could say we had a drink when we were three years old and we haven't drunk anything since we drink every day people tell us how important it is to drink lots and lots of water well that's true spiritually as well you need to keep on and on drinking drinking of Christ thirst every one one of should feel one of us should feel a thirst a tiny bit away from Christ we should have a longing within us to come closer to him again whenever you feel within your soul that you need more come to him because he has an abundant free supply of living water but it isn't only water he who has no money come buy and eat so there's food as well come buy wine and milk without money and without price water we could say is a necessity food is a necessity but wine and milk are surely luxuries these were the riches that Israel had been promised in the land of

Canaan it was a land remember of milk and honey a land of vineyards and olive groves remember how the twelve spies bought back from the promised land a huge bough laden with grapes from the

promised land all of this will find its spiritual fulfilment in the kingdom of God where we will enjoy the milk and the meat of the word and the wine of the Holy Spirit and all of it is free completely free they are without price in fact in a double sense they're priceless in the sense that they're too valuable to place a price on and they're priceless in the sense that no price is asked a price has been paid of course only not by us

Christ has paid the full price himself the market trader as it were hasn't just come by these goods for nothing he has bought them at great expense though he offers them to you for nothing Isaiah makes that very clear back in chapter 53 where he describes Christ dying for our sins so that we might live that was the price he paid with his blood he bore in his own body the curse of God so that we might receive all the blessings of heaven it's ironic isn't it that on the cross the Lord Jesus actually said I thirst there is the one who gives the living water reduced to thirst himself he thirsted so that we might not thirst interesting too that they gave him sour wine to drink on the cross sour wine is given to the

Lord Jesus in order that we might have the perfect spiritual wine there was great cost to him but no cost at all to us these things are ours by faith yes following Christ might prove to be costly but salvation itself is completely free the problem is of course that people still try to pay for it imagine in that market scene that people come rushing up and they start insisting that they will buy these things you say you're going to give me wine and milk for free no no no I won't take it for free here look I'll give you 50 shekels for it no the Lord will not accept that in fact even to offer it is an insult to him these blessings are worth far far more than we could ever offer the only way that you can receive them is to humbly accept them accept them as a gift by faith it's no use offering up your good works as a price that you're prepared to pay to obtain salvation your offer will be refused no you must accept it by faith admit that you have no money at least not the kind of money that you need and accept what the

[26 : 46] Lord offers that's what we mean when we say that salvation is by grace it's the free gift of God as Paul says the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord but not everyone is even seeking eternal life let's look now at the foolish choice of the world in verse 2 why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labour for that which does not satisfy you sense that the Lord is exasperated with people that they can be so foolish I imagine that all of us at some time have bought something possibly at great cost which didn't live up to its expectations imagine going into that market and buying what you thought was a delicious loaf of wholemeal bread and when you got it home it proved to be rock hard and you couldn't eat it or worse still it turned out it wasn't really bread at all that you'd been conned maybe it was just a block of wood covered with some sandpaper to look like bread you'd be angry you'd go back to the market and demand your money back and very likely you'd find the market trader had gone or else he'd have some perfectly plausible excuse and you would have simply lost your money that is how the

Lord views this world it's a fruitless search for fulfilment everything that the world gives you turns out to be in some way or other a disappointment sometimes it turns out to be an outright con trick and there's nothing at all in it often even though it might be reasonably good in itself it isn't what you hoped for people look in all kinds of things for fulfilment don't they some look for satisfaction in their work others go on expensive holidays some accumulate possessions others indulge in all kinds of pleasures some look to various kinds of religion or philosophy and no doubt all of these things do bring some measure of happiness but they don't give you what you really want and what you really need they all leave you with a gap inside that is unfulfilled as Augustine said you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you

Pascal spoke of an infinite abyss that can only be filled by God someone has paraphrased that as a God shaped gap inside our souls why waste your life the Lord is saying on things that don't satisfy you when you could have something that does he's not saying that we shouldn't enjoy this world of course not God made the world and there's much in this world that is good and pleasurable and given to us to enjoy just don't expect too much from it the things of this world will often cost you a lot of money and a lot of effort and still leave you empty whereas Christ can give you complete satisfaction indeed

Christ offers you a spiritual feast let's look now at the feast that he promises the end of verse 2 and into verse 3 listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food 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 eating the right food has become something of an obsession these days hasn't it but most people only think of it in physical terms lots of vitamins lots of fibre not too much fat or salt or sugar and then we hope we'll have a healthy body but spiritually we need the right food too and the best food of all is the word of God because here we can feast upon Christ himself and that will give us a healthy soul

I don't know if anyone is using the authorised version this evening but if you are you'll have the rather unfortunate translation here delight thyself in fatness I sometimes jokingly quote that not exactly what most of us want the ESV translation rich food is better but even that's slightly confusing because someone might say well rich food doesn't really agree with me the new King James is probably the best translation let your soul delight itself in abundance spiritual abundance abundance that's what the Lord offers as Paul says in Ephesians 1 God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places the promise here is that your soul will live in the fullest possible sense as Jesus says in

[33 : 21] John 10 I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly and that life is ours forever as he says here he will make with us an everlasting covenant covenant that covenant is described here as my steadfast sure love for David other versions have the sure mercies of David what does he mean by that well that phrase is quoted in the New Testament quoted by Paul in Acts 13 verse 34 as a reference to the resurrection in the New King James version that verse reads that he raised him Jesus from the dead no more to return to corruption he has spoken thus I will give you the sure mercies of David so how does David come into all this well David was promised that his throne would last forever and that promise is fulfilled in Christ so what is being promised here is simply this that in him we will have everlasting life everlasting abundance remains for me to ask as we draw to a close have you come to the waters have you drunk of that life giving stream have you bought your free milk and free wine are you enjoying the abundance that Christ alone can give you if you haven't yet come then now is the time here is an open invitation to you

Christ himself says come come and receive full salvation come and enjoy life to the full and if you are a Christian keep coming you see there is an endless supply of spiritual blessing awaiting for you in Christ remember that time in the wilderness when Moses spoke to the rock and the water gushed out there was enough water there for the whole of Israel probably about two million people maybe more the water just kept on coming that's how it is with the spiritual blessings we have in Christ they keep on flowing they keep on coming there is always more Jesus speaks in

John 7 of rivers of living water not just a drop or two not even just a river but rivers plural implying again an endless abundance of blessing the promised land was described as a land flowing with milk and honey not just a place where you will find some milk and honey if you search hard enough for it a land flowing with milk and honey abundance just for the taking or think about the feeding of the 5,000 Jesus didn't merely feed a whole vast multitude but they all had as much as they wanted and there was still some left over and did anyone have to pay for it did they pass around the collection bowl afterwards to pay for your bread and your fish of course not it was completely free there is plenty in

Christ for us all and plenty for all time whenever you feel thirsty come to Christ whenever you want more come to him he is waiting for you and he says come let's conclude our service by