

He Will Abundantly Pardon

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[0 : 01] When speaking from an Old Testament prophet in a one-off sermon, I always think it's good even just to introduce who he was and when he spoke. I'm constantly looking at the introduction sections in my Bible to see what I am reading about. Isaiah was a major prophet who ministered from 740 to 701 BC and he was contemporaries with other prophets like Amos, Micah and Hosea.

His name means the Lord saves. He was given words from God to rebuke and call back God's people to himself. We find himself in Isaiah 55 predicting the blessing of God after the exile for his people.

With both warning not to fall into old sin habits and a call to come to God. So let's now pray for ourselves before we come to God's Word. Our Lord, we thank you that you have given us your Word.

We pray that as we come to it that you prepare our hearts, that your Spirit is our teacher, and that you are glorified in everything that happens here today. We pray all this in Jesus Christ's name. Amen. It's the start of a new year. So in that vein, I want to be positive.

And we'll see that the scripture does have positive truth for us, but yet doesn't change the fact that life can still be confusing. I wonder, do you ever feel like you're living life day to day and going nowhere? Are you making resolutions to break this pattern? Do you try and try and try some more, but never seem to be any near to fulfilling your five-year or 10-year life plan? Can it feel futile?

[2 : 16] At the start of this year, do you feel distant from God? You can feel all these things, or maybe remember a time when one of them is the most prominent in your life. Isaiah 55 has an answer to all of these concerns. It speaks into the lives when they feel pointless, and it teaches us how to deal with the major problem of being withdrawn from God. This morning, we will negotiate this chapter given to us by God by looking at three areas of God pardoning abundantly. First, come and seek.

Second, abundant pardon, looking both at the quality and quantity of that pardon. And third, everlasting bread and wine. Initially, when I sat down to prepare this service, my intention was to preach from Ephesians. However, I was in a series of lectures in ETS, and the lecture referred to verse 1 of Isaiah 55. And then I confess I was distracted by the beauty of this chapter, and I had an urge I wanted to preach from it. It's so deeply rich in God's heart for his people.

You may remember, even though I'm aware factually some of you are too young, Tony Blair's manifesto which brought Labour to a landslide victory in 1997.

It basically composed of three words, education, education, and education. However, here in Isaiah 55, God's manifesto is clearly grace, grace, grace.

Are there multiple steps to God's manifesto? No, just one, Jesus Christ. Yes, you may be thinking we're looking at the Old Testament, granted even from the prophet who's associated with predicting Jesus. However, this isn't Isaiah 7. She will be our son and we'll call him Emmanuel. Or Isaiah 53, he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

[4 : 41] The punishment that was brought, brought us peace was on him. By his wounds we are healed. But even though Isaiah 55 is not as explicit a direct mention of Christ as these two previous passages, I hope to make clear Isaiah 55 has a trapezy of Christ woven through this whole section.

The manifesto could be called grace, grace, grace, or Christ, Christ, and more Christ. Come and seek. Let us work through this chapter, discovering the truth together, starting with this first verse, reading one through three again.

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 spend your money on that which is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen to me diligently, 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 an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. And then in verse six, seek the Lord while he may be found.

[6 : 05] Call upon him while he's near. Let us ground ourselves once again. Who is the prophet speaking to in these verses? He's speaking to God's covenant chosen people within the family of God.

Why is this brilliant? It is truly brilliant because these points immediately are important not just to non-Christians, come and be saved, but to Christians as well, come, come, and come. The threefold come in verses one through three, and the seek in verse six. They are summons for God's people to come to himself and to respond to his generous love.

It's not like playing tag with kids when you're on opposite sides of a table. However far you move towards each other, you always stay at the same distance apart.

God's not playing tag with us, but he's calling us to come to him because he has already come towards us. God walked in the garden with Adam, spoke to Moses and his people through the prophets, and lowered himself in coming to earth in the God-man, Jesus Christ, who we've just heard about so much over the Christmas period.

[7 : 32] Where in these two terms of come and seek do we find Jesus Christ? I challenge anyone in this room to hear the words, come all who are thirsty, and seek the Lord without hearing Jesus' own words saying, come to me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest, Matthew 11, 28.

Or seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you, Matthew 6, 33. Jesus always chooses his words carefully.

He chooses them specifically as they highlight from the Old Testament, in which way he is the promised Messiah and the fulfillment of all the prophecies regarding himself.

What's the reverse of this call? Isaiah, as said, has a long ministry before the exile, warning of the exile.

Isaiah, as said, is the first commandment. He's well placed to know the sins which led to God's punishment. He saw the mass sin, the unfairness, but above all the shortfalls was the fact that Israel broke the first commandment.

[8 : 55] God was not there first in their hearts. They had idols, but even worse than that, within their hearts as a whole, they worshipped themselves.

The reverse of that call would be, go back and do everything that brings death and enmity with God, as were happening before the exile.

But the true call here, though, is to the backslidden, to come and to seek. Trust in Christ alone for salvation.

Old Testament Jews who trusted in God were saved by Christ's death on the cross. Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteous.

This was faith in God. A whole life of loving God with all, above all, in their hearts was what Isaiah was calling the Israelites to. Their salvation did rest in Christ.

[9 : 53] Their summon was to have assurance in that faith by trusting in God genuinely. Even though they did not know or understand Christ, he would be the way in which God would save them eternally.

Come, seek. Come to God now, today. If you have forgotten the joy of being with Christ, come back to him. No sin is unforgiven because Christ paid it all.

If there's anyone here who has come today just wondering what this whole Christianity thing is about, I have good news for you. All that hopelessness, all that loneliness, the uncertainty about the future can be traded in a second for becoming a son and daughter of God.

And the real assurance that your future is safe by putting your trust in Jesus Christ who died on the cross for your sins. Yes, the difficult times might not change, but your future is safe.

The call today is the same as it was to the historic Jews. Trust in Christ. He will not let you down.

[11 : 12] If you're walking closely with the Lord, the Lord's call is, keep coming and keep seeking. There is a rich depth of joy found in Christ.

If you're a Christian who's distant from God, come back again and seek him once more. If you've never known Christ, you're here today because Christ is calling you to come and he's calling you to seek.

So we've seen, we are being compelled to come to God through Christ. But what about is pardon? What is it like? Abundant pardon.

So my personal Bible for reading and writing is the ASV. The title of the service as a whole is He Will Abundantly Pardon. The title of the section is Abundant Pardon.

The phrase doesn't come about from any cleverness of myself, but comes straight out of the translation of verse 7. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

[12 : 23] Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. I was in a bathroom in ETS.

Don't worry, this story is not going to take a turn for the worst. I was washing my hands. I turned on the tap and out of the tap surged a torrent of water.

I was soaked. The floor was soaked. It was a case of a very small sink and a very strong tap. You could say a lot about ETS, but their water pressure you just cannot complain.

It made me think about that after I got over the initial frustration of being soaked, that it's like God's endless compassion and grace for us.

A complete overflow. We said in our call to worship that she has received from the Lord double for all her sins.

[13 : 30] The hymn Rock of Ages has a line within it that I'm sure is inspired by this verse. Be of sin the double cure. Save from wrath and make me pure.

God says to us, never worry. There is always enough grace. Are you unsure? I will tell you there is always double you will ever need.

It is truly abundant. It is a truly abundant pardon. A complete overflow. Like bathing in a lake.

You do not need all this water. Your bath at home will do. But there's this fastness to God's grace.

Let's home in two aspects of that abundant pardon in the text here in Isaiah.

First, abundant quality. Abundant quality. Verses 1 and 2. Come everyone who thirsts, come to the waters and he who has no money, come buy and eat.

[14 : 36] Come buy wine without money. Come buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money on what does not satisfy and what does not bread?

And your labor which does not satisfy. Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food. Verse 5. For he has glorified you.

Verse 7. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion in him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. So in scripture, the terminology of wine and milk are statements of luxury.

We see this in places in the Bible like the likes of Joel 3. In that day, the mountains will drip new wine and the hills will flow with milk.

All the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the Lord's house. There is a luxury. An indulgent abundance.

[15 : 39] It makes you ponder heaven, does it not? We can't imagine what it would be like, but we are excited for it for when it comes. Because God promises astonishing things.

The term wine here is also an important indicator towards Christ. God promises wine at no cost in Isaiah 55.

What does Christ do in his first miracle in John chapter 2? He provides wine at no cost. And not only average wine, but the best to the point the master of the feast was in confusion that the best wine was served last.

Christ gives us good gifts. John in chapter 2, 11, when he was summing up that event, said this is the first of his signs Jesus did at Canaan in Galilee and manifested his glory.

God promises in Isaiah. Christ fulfills in John. In Isaiah 5, God promises that his people will be endowed with splendor.

[16 : 49] That brings us to Paul in Ephesians 5, 25 through 27. Him. Christ loved the church and he gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her having cleansed her by the washing of water with word so that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish.

Isaiah promises the people of God to be endowed with splendor. Paul tells us Christ is the way in which this happens. He gave himself for the church.

She will be without spot. She will be without wrinkle. She will be holy and without blemish. The quality of God's abundant pardon is without question.

Abundant quality. But what about abundant quantity? Our second subheading abundant quantity comes from verses four through five.

Behold I made him a witness to the peoples and a leader a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold you shall call a nation that you do not know and a nation that did not know you shall run to you.

[18 : 12] We've spoken previously about the abundant quantitative overflowing nature of God's grace for the individual for us for you for me that assured that assurance of being saved that there's always enough grace and that God's well will never run dry but what about God's heart for people groups?

God would have the right if it were in his will to set his love upon Abraham and the Jews send Christ to save them and we would be watching from the outside this amazing redemption plan for these peoples we would be rightly sad but we could still see the grace and wonder for them but that was not God's plan.

Have you ever walked through one of those proper high-end markets and city centres with that awareness that you just don't belong?

That maybe people are judging you for your legitimacy for even just being there. We as a family did so in London over the October break. No one challenged us but there was that vibe that you're not meant to be here where there's security and proper suits.

Maybe that would be what a Gentile would feel like walking into the temple in Jerusalem. However as said that was not God's plan not for us to be onlookers that is not God's will we are not to be on the outside but we've been brought into the family of God.

[20 : 01] Verse 5 Behold you shall call a nation that you do not know and a nation that did not know you shall run to you. Here we are seeing God's redemptive plan through the binoculars of scripture not just for the Jew but also for the Gentile which really does matter as most of us are probably ethnic Gentiles.

In Hosea 2 23 God speaks of his attention for us. I will show my love to the one I called not my loved one. I will say to those called not my people you are my people.

I will say you are and they will say you are my God. Paul in Galatians 6 verse 6 speaks of our status in Christ.

This is the mystery that the Gentiles are fellow heirs members of that same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

You sitting here today are proof of Christ's fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah. God's pardon is abundant in quantity and we are beneficiaries of that truth.

[21 : 21] Abundant quantity. So we found God's pardon is abundant in quantity and in quality and we receive it by coming to Christ by coming and seeking.

Let's look at our third point everlasting bread and wine from verse two. Why spend your money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in richest food. We must first answer the question what is true hunger and thirst spoken of here?

Are we talking about physical thirst or hunger or metaphorical thirst or hunger? In John 6 that we read earlier verse 27 Jesus says do not work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life which the son of man will give you for on him God the father has placed his seal of approval the answer is found here that food produces eternal life Paul in Colossians 3 1-2 says seek the things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God set your mind on things that are above not on things that are on earth or even Jesus very own famous words of Mark 8 36 for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul we're looking at the human condition the strive for true reality the war against the feeling of futility and life what's the point and if there is one how can this be achieved we look outside and see a world with so little hope because they have so little

Christ often none at all the analogy that Isaiah and Jesus employs here is fitting as we can understand physical hunger and then it applies easier to the concept of things including eternal life I'm aware this statement is a risk especially when we're so geographically close people often get offended when I say that I don't like McDonald's Noah might even be giving me the angry eyes of us to look there if you want to see them later ask them after service he'll happily do it but McDonald's

costs a lot I know there's a nutritional deficit that's happened I can eat lots and never be satisfied and that's happened because of my choice McDonald's doesn't satisfy a good healthy balanced meal at home does life living living for a bigger bank account the best technology the greatest status we can acquire none of these things will do anything for you after you die it's a false promise living life for now brings no joy and brings no hope my son was doing a school project on the [24 : 41] Egyptians not only would they leave objects in their coffin to use in the afterlife but one thing I did learn is they would also go through rituals by touching things against their physical body to give them senses in the afterlife too this is as useless as living for a bigger bank account now all these rituals and lifestyles will do nothing for anyone past death Jesus though has the answer to this realistic problem in his discourse with the Pharisees in John 6 32 through 35 which we read earlier Jesus said to them very truly I tell you it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven but it is the father who gives you the bread from heaven for the bread of God is and gives life to the world sir they said always give us this bread then

Jesus declared I am the bread of life whoever comes to me will never go hungry and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty not only this anyone whoever all who come to him will never be thirsty they'll always be satisfied however in Isaiah the section we looked at there's another beautiful thing another beautiful aspect to this truth and he who has no money come buy and eat come buy wine and milk without money without cost it's free salvation through Christ is free all Scottish people everywhere celebrate because it's free all we have to do is trust in him I said earlier in my children's talk to the children that Paul sums up how to be saved in

Romans 10 9 if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is the Lord believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved it is free believe in him I hope we see the links between Isaiah's prophecies and what Jesus stated of himself I hope we can see that we can only get everlasting bread and wine from him this year come and seek this year see God's abundant pardon for you it is true hope this year remember it is Christ who satisfies trust in him there is no futility in a life following Christ I will leave the final words to Jesus in Matthew 11 28 come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest amen let's pray our great saviour we are moved to the very depths of our souls by your love towards us we thank you for your word that teaches us of your abundant grace that you have joyfully willed to give us through

Christ we have no money that can buy the food and wine that you offer life giving food eternal life through your son Jesus Christ we praise you we don't need money we thank you that you have met our greatest need and salvation through Christ and this year new year ahead we confirm again we confess our trust in you as our God our King our Saviour and our Friend we pray all these things in Christ's name Amen Monégmeye to■ this