

Isaiah 55:1-13

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[0:00] Good morning, church. It's great to be here this morning. My name is Matt. I'm blessed to be one of the pastors or elders here at Shoreline.

! And I'm blessed to be able to bring God's Word to you this morning. While we're here, we've arrived at the final week of our 16-chapter series in Isaiah, here in chapter 55 of Isaiah, in a series entitled From Sighing to Singing.

Remember, the book of Isaiah is written prophetically to the future exiled Jews in Babylonian captivity. They are oppressed, hopeless, discouraged, and away from home. But more important than their physical dilemma is their spiritual dilemma.

They're at odds with God. Chapters 40 to 55 of Isaiah are, however, ultimately a message of hope amidst despair. But how could that be? The clear answer in these last few chapters of Isaiah is through restoration.

God is a God of restoration. Chapters 44 to 48 hone in on Israel's physical restoration from bondage and back into the promised land, accomplished through God's use of his servant Cyrus.

[1:18] In chapters 49 to 55, shift to the hope of spiritual restoration out of a damaged relationship into a healthy one, a peaceful one that comes through God using his servant Christ, the Messiah.

The last two weeks we've seen this restoration on full display. We saw two weeks ago in Isaiah 53, a beautifully poetic text that restoration is possible through the Lord's suffering servant, the exalted sin bearer.

Next, chapter 54, restoration is permanent through the Lord's eternal covenant of peace. And finally, today we'll see in chapter 55 that God brings restoration through personal invitation.

The title of this sermon is God's Great Invitation to Restoration. And we're going to see today in Isaiah 55 that God is inviting Israel into a most excellent, a most wonderful, a most exciting something.

It's an invitation to restore their commitment or covenant to God. And his to them. I think the clear main point of Isaiah 55 is this.

[2:31] God offers Israel a personal invitation to spiritual restoration. And what do I hope to accomplish today?

What do I hope that each of us might learn today? Well, my goal is that our time together today would accomplish this. That each of us might see our invitation to our own restoration and decide how we might respond to it.

That's my goal for today. Before we begin, let's pray. Heavenly Father, I ask that today you would open our ears, soften our hearts to the timeless truths, the timeless truths in your word today.

God, do this for your glory and for our good. Amen. Well, I see five clear facts about restoration in Isaiah 55's invitation.

We'll discover the first one in verses 1 through 3a. Read with me. Come, everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters and he who has no money.

[3:44] 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. Delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and come to me. Hear that your soul may live. The first thing we see about restoration in this passage, and here's our first point.

If you're taking notes, this would be something to write down. A restoration comes through proper nourishment. You probably noticed the repeated idea in these verses.

The word come is used four times. And we see listen and incline your ear in verses 2 and 3. That God is beckoning the reader, originally the nation of Israel, to something.

And with clarity and urgency. And who is he inviting? What kind of person? In verse 1, an invitation for nourishment with water is offered to those who thirst.

[4:52] God says, come and drink. A person can live weeks without food, but only days without water. Water is essential to life. And this invitation's nourishment, first and foremost, meets a fundamental human need.

And note the plural word, waters. This isn't a call to a single 32-ounce water bottle. It's an abundance of vast supply of water.

Further on in verse 1, we see the invitation now includes food, wine, and milk. We see a progression from essential thirst quenching to a deeper, more satisfactory nourishment.

Milk is a building block of a baby's rapidly growing body, packed with essential nutrients. And wine, as an important staple in Jewish culture, was used for celebrations and associated with merriment, joy, and revival of one's spirit.

How splendid the Lord's offer for a spectrum of nourishment, both with what is essential for survival in life, that's water and milk, and also what is joyously enjoyed in wine.

[6:03] And this offer keeps getting better. But perhaps the most exciting part is that there is no cost for this feast. It's an offer to those without money.

Buy without money and without price, it says. This is a gift that's readily available, simply waiting for our acceptance. On a silver platter, as the saying goes.

And leave your wallet at home. This is quite an invitation. But then in verse 2, the tone shifts when God asks, Why are you purchasing nutrition and laboring for that which does not satisfy?

And in light of the invitation for good free nourishment and thirst quenching water, why would you consume and work for unsatisfactory nourishment? God is saying, Why bother with anything else other than my satisfying free offer?

And if he hadn't gotten the reader's attention yet, he says, Listen diligently and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food. Good, rich food that sounds like what anyone who is thinking sensibly would want, right?

[7:15] Is this making anyone hungry? What we see in verses 1 and 2 are physical illustrations that represent spiritual truths.

God is telling Israel that just like food and water are needed for physical life, so also the spiritual food and water that I'm offering are needed for spiritual life. God's not offering tableside restaurant service, but a spiritual feast of highest quality.

Greatest satisfaction, free of cost is people. If they would come, listen diligently, incline their ear, and then feast.

And why is God offering Israel this feast? I think it's because God knew that Israel in exile was in a state of spiritual malnutrition and dissatisfaction, and he longed for their restoration, and so he urged them, Come, listen diligently, to partake of proper spiritual nourishment, which he offered.

So what nourishment were they consuming? Well, throughout Israel's history, their pursuit of idols was a habit they refused to break, as they repeatedly returned to them and pushed God away.

[8:33] See, they grabbed onto idols with one hand and pushed God away with the other. Worshiping an idol is to the soul what feeding on ashes would be to the body.

There's no nourishment or satisfaction, one commentator wrote about verse 20 of Isaiah 44. They nourished themselves to no end with the world's fleeting pleasures, their selfish sin, rebellion, imitation of other nations, instead of feasting on God's wine and milk and coming to the waters of abundance, joy, and blessing that God offered to them time and time again.

God saw Israel spiritually malnourished and dissatisfied state, and here in Isaiah 55 offered them not what they wanted, but what he knew they needed.

And you know what, Christian, it might be what you need too. What's your current spiritual state? Maybe like Israel, you can clearly identify that you're spiritually malnourished and dissatisfied.

Or maybe you just feel unenthusiastic or lethargic to spiritual things. Wondering what's going on and thinking about what your former spiritual state was, or if it ever has been what it should be. [9:52] Maybe like Israel, you find yourself running to your idols, returning to them, and indulging in the same habits time and time again. And repeatedly, you found yourself feasting on ashes and the sinful nourishment that does not satisfy, yet longing for more of the same.

Stuck in a vicious cycle of trying to quench spiritual hunger and thirst with sin to fill a void that you feel deep inside. You found yourself seeing this beautiful red shiny apple, and upon biting it, you realize that inside it's actually rotten and hollow, void of calories or nourishment.

So what did God's people need? What do you need? To come to God, to turn from sin and rebellion, to listen to his voice through his prophets and his word, forsaking idols' subservient pleasures, to quit feasting on ashes from idols and instead delight in rich food, to hear and hold to his promises and truths, to take pleasure in serving the one true God and commit to a relationship to him, not a relationship to the world and pursuing trivial things and dead ends.

That would be satisfying, true, vibrant, spiritual life, church. That would be life-giving revival to spiritually dead souls.

That is to come and drink plentifully and to eat well of God's spiritual feast. And what would be the promised results of partaking of God's invitation for proper nourishment?

[11:40] Life! Verse 3 says that your soul may live to be truly spiritually alive. For Israel and for us, restoration comes in part through proper nourishment.

Okay, I acknowledge where I am, maybe you're saying. It's not good, so what can I do? Well, here's something just super practical. Assess if you're regularly nourishing yourself with good spiritual food, with God's spiritual feasts, his word, the Bible, communing with him and feasting on Christ and what he's done.

And this will actually be our fourth point today. How do I know if I'm being nourished by spiritual food? Well, feasting on spiritual food will result in manifesting the fruit or the evidence of the Spirit in you.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Galatians 5, 22-23. Are you manifesting these things?

Fruit of the Spirit? If not, then you're likely manifesting these symptoms of spiritual malnutrition. Feeling empty, restless, unfulfilled, apathetic.

[13:09] A tendency towards being easily overcome by fear, anxiety, and discouragement. Anger, jealousy, selfishness, and pride. Withdrawing from Christian community. Lack of spiritual disciplines like Bible reading, prayer, and worshiping God through all of life.

Overall, a lack of longing for God and a decreased desire or appetite for spiritual things. Okay, let's look at our next group of verses.

Verse 3b through 5. Here's what the text says. Verse 3b through 5.

The true spiritual life God offers, which brings, as verse 3 says, life to your soul, comes through covenant relationship with God.

And that covenant relationship brought blessings. The second thing we see about restoration in this passage is that, here's our second point, restoration brings covenant relationship blessings.

[14:46] So what blessings was God wanting to renew through restoring their covenant together? The covenant with Israel. First and foremost, the blessing of a renewed relationship itself.

In scripture, a covenant is a relational agreement between two parties. In this case, God and Israel. The greatest blessing of the Davidic covenant was the relationship that Israel was able to have with God.

God's calling them back with reminders of the covenant He has made with their people through David, telling them that He would confirm His everlasting covenant called the Davidic covenant laid out in 2 Samuel chapter 7.

The promises in this covenant were an eternal kingdom, an eternal king, universal peace and righteousness, abundant prosperity, justice, and equity throughout the world.

It's mind-boggling that a wonderfully righteous and good God would covenant with a perpetually sinful people. But the one-sided relationship that Israel was allowing due to their sin would, by its nature, cripple the objective of the covenant relationship that God established.

[16:03] Remember, my covenant with you through David, God is saying. It's still there, so return to me and let us renew this covenant together.

This Davidic covenant blessing is expounded upon in verse 4. As God draws upon David as an example, one commentary said, As David was, so Israel would be when they returned to him. David was a witness to the covenant in that God began to fulfill His plan through him. Israel would also be a testimony to God's promises as they returned to Palestine and become a people again. God's steadfast and sure love for David came through a covenant. How wonderful it would be for Israel to reap the same love that their forefather David did if they would return to God and be restored.

The final blessing we see in verse 5, that God would use Israel as a tool to bring other nations to Himself. I found one resource particularly helpful in explaining this.

[17:21] Because the Lord will endow with splendor, see the end of verse 5, He has glorified you. people will see God's gracious dealings and run to Him. But note the emphasis of the passage.

Israel will summon them. Israel always was to be a kingdom of priests, a light to the nations, a channel of blessings.

But if people do not believe themselves and fail to restore their position as covenant recipients, they will never do this. And they would miss out on this wonderful blessing to be used by God.

You can shut it off if you want. So our second point today in verses 3b through 5, we see God is longing for Israel to take them up on His offer to come to Him that they might receive through restoration covenant relationship blessings.

And the beauty of covenant relationship and blessings is ours today as well, Shoreline. Jesus Christ is the King seated on the eternal throne that the divinic covenant foretold.

[18:30] He is the King. He's God's messianic fulfillment. He will reign forever and ever and His rule will have no end. Christian, through Christ, Christian, through Christ, you are a member of a heavenly kingdom and spiritual family whose blessings are beyond measure.

If you are in Christ, you are a recipient of these promises to David through Christ. The divinic covenant is alive here and now and its perfect and ultimate fulfillment will be yours in heaven for eternity where there will be a perfect peace, worldwide blessing and prosperity for all time for God's covenant people.

But let me ask you, is your relationship to God of high value to you? Do you cherish it? Do you see yourself as a blessed recipient of God's intentional, carefully crafted once and for all promises to David?

Are you a testimony of God's covenant promises based on how you live? Could God use you right now as a witness to the nations as he did David that people might come to commit to him as Lord and Savior?

Are you living ready to channel this blessing to those around you? Channel his blessing to those around you? See, God is looking for us just like he was for Israel to restore that relationship to reopen the covenant blessings to you and thus those around you.

[20:07] he's knocking at the proverbial door of renewed relationship. But my question is, will you open the door? Will you open it?

Thankfully, one spiritual and relational state to God is never too far gone. Restoration is always possible in light of the amazing forgiveness that God offers.

Let's read verses 6-7. 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.

Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon. The third thing we see about restoration in this passage is that restoration is built on repentance and forgiveness.

Restoration is built on repentance and forgiveness. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near.

[21:14] Seek while the Spirit is beckoning you, friend. Seek while your sin is so clear. Seek now while God is waiting for you. Why would you delay?

How can you seek him? Call upon him in earnest prayer and desperate prayer. It doesn't need to be elegant or carefully crafted. You don't have to pray like anyone that you see up here or anyone that you listen to online.

It simply needs to be from the heart and he's waiting for you. God longed to bring Israel back into promised land their home as well as back into a healthy relationship with him.

But this couldn't be the case outside of the admission of wrong and submission to God's rule and reign over their self-rule and reign. The thoughts and ways of the wicked, God says, must be forsaken.

They must be left behind and not looked back to. This is a full 180. True biblical repentance. Ready? Here it is. Okay?

[22:24] Or, you could do this. But that's a little harder. I think you get the picture. It's going one way and then turning around.

It's forsaking our sin. That's true biblical repentance. It's not saying I'm sorry and then continuing in it.

And look at the promise. Repentance. Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion and abundantly pardon. This is not a flippant pardon like before a judge.

Yes, you're pardoned. Go on. This is a loving one and to a great degree. How glorious, how wonderful and gracious is the God of Israel.

That's my God. God. It's your God. God's people ought not doubt for a second his ability and willingness to forgive them when they ask. So brother or sister in this room today, right now, seek the Lord while he may be found.

[23:31] Call upon him while he is near. Forsake your ways and your thoughts. Don't fool yourself into thinking that you can continue on in your sinful ways and seek the Lord at the same time.

Return to God Almighty that he may shower his grace and forgiveness upon your helpless soul. The time for seeking is now. Repent and be forgiven and begin the process of relational renewal and restoration that God invites you to.

Restoration is built on repentance and then forgiveness. And maybe you're thinking, Matt, this is great and all, but it's hard. Being a follower of Jesus is hard.

It's not easy to do this. Seeking God, calling upon him in prayer, trusting that he'll forgive me.

Seeking spiritual nourishment, turning from sin and self. Maybe you try and try but manifest the fruit of spiritual malnourishment far too often and the fruit of a spirit-filled life far too little.

And it's hard being a testimony of God's covenant blessing and light to the nations. Maybe Christianity feels more like a burden and a bother than a blessing. And it requires a lot of faith and sometimes having faith, really trusting God and living like it is hard.

[24:52] It's really hard. But Christian, God knows this about us. He understands us. In these next four verses, God offers restoration assurance for those that are feeling unassured and weary.

The fourth thing we see about restoration is that restoration comes with assurance. God's way, God's word. 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. my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out of my mouth.

It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall exceed in the thing for which I sent it. I want us to look really carefully at verse 8 because if we miss this, we've missed something so wonderfully important.

Yes, God's thoughts and ways and plans are beyond our reach. They are eternal and ours are temporal. They exist in a sphere that we could never imagine.

[26:21] We will never fully understand his divine ways, plans. But the reason this phrase is here, right where it is, isn't just for the sake of

us saying, oh well, God's thoughts are higher than mine when something shocking or unexpected happens in our lives that we can't explain.

Well, God's thoughts are higher than mine, so let's move on. There's much more to this. Hear this. A great chasm exists between the thoughts and ways of man and thoughts and ways of God. This chasm that is truly immeasurable and unfathomable is as high as the heavens are from the earth. But why? Why would a God who longs for a relationship with man remove himself so far from them?

Ah, he hasn't removed himself from us. You know what's coming. Friend, we have removed ourselves from him. The wicked ways and unrighteous thoughts of man that we see in verse 7 have created this unbridgeable chasm between God and man.

Remember, before sin entered the world, God walked with Adam and Eve right there in the Garden of Eden. Fellowship and relationship according to God's design.

[27:47] It's our sin that has forced an irreconcilable gap between us and God because he is a holy and righteous God, sinless and perfect in all his ways and thoughts, and we are wicked in ours as a sinful and unholy people.

This is the story of human history. God has done and there's hope because God has done something about this unbridgeable gap. Not only are God's thoughts and ways not sinful and ugly like ours, but they contain a perfect understanding of the world.

They lack nothing. That God sees everything, every detail, every molecule of everything ever created and he knows exactly what is needed for spiritual life.

This is so exciting and I hope God will use me to do this justice. I borrowed heavily from the great pastor John Piper in this idea.

This is not my idea but this is beautiful. God knows what we need. The verse 10 is an illustration. It says, coming from above, from the unfathomable distance, God does something.

[29:10] He sends rain and snow from the heavens and he makes it fall to the earth. But the rain and snow, they don't begin falling and then go back up.

It wouldn't make any sense. They continue to fall and when it does, it has a divinely inspired effect. It waters the earth.

Water from the heavens, from where God resides, hits the earth and brings forth sprout. It produces growth. And this growth continues and is more and more and eventually it brings seed and finally bread from crop.

It supplies bread for nourishment and seed for more growth. For growth upon growth. And the rain and snow continue. They're cyclical processes.

It's raining right now. And also the growth and seed and bread will continue. Okay, so what? Verse 11 interprets this illustration.

[30:15] God says, so shall my word do the same when it goes from my mouth. So also God's word, when it comes forth from his mouth from the heavens, it will not return back to him without accomplishing the goal that he has for his word to accomplish.

It won't fall from earth. No, it will fall to earth to us that it might bring growth and provide seed and bread and provide nourishment and water for those of us on earth who are in need of these things in order to have spiritual life.

So God promises that his word by his design and plan will accomplish the goal that it has set out to accomplish. And what is God's word?

Well, certainly it is what we hear him say in scripture. The Bible is the word of God. Every chapter, every verse.

But also the word is Jesus Christ. Look at John chapter 1. This is so exciting. I hope you see this. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

[31:31] He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him not anything made, not anything made that was made. Jump down to verse 14 of John 1.

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth.

Do you see it? God has sent his son, his word down from heaven to bridge this immeasurable gap that exists between us and him that our sin has created.

He has made a way to restore our damaged relationship by sending his son to accomplish his mission, to accomplish that which God purposed in sending Christ.

And this restoration happens through feeding and nourishing us through Christ and his word, the revelation of God in the flesh and the good news of the gospel.

[32:43] So the call in verses 1 to 3 to come and listen and be nourished are called to feast on God's word and Christ, the word of God sent from heaven for our nourishment, the watering, the growth, the seed, the bread.

Deuteronomy 8, 3 says, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. And Jesus said, right, so there's God's word and here's Christ the word.

Jesus says in John 6, I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me shall not hunger and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

And when we are nourished by this word, this spiritual feast that God has offered, it will accomplish the goal of sending, his goal of sending Christ. Namely, reconciliation of relationship.

That's why God has sent Christ. And do you know what? We will find that when we are nourished by Christ and God's word, our thoughts do become more like God's thoughts.

[33:51] Our ways do become more like God's ways. Not fully, but in part. Our desires change when restoration has its way in us.

And we become pleasing to him. And we honor him with our lives. And that insurmountable gap between heaven and earth lessens as we become like Jesus.

All possible through Christ himself. So look at the restoration assurance that God offers in these verses. Restoration comes with assurance.

Assurance for forgiveness and relational restoration through his ways and his word. Sending his son to bridge the gap between us and him.

There's no greater assurance that God could give than him providing faithfully to his covenant through sending Christ to do the unthinkable.

[34:59] Hopefully you're seeing how these facets of God's invitation to restoration all fit together. here. This is it. This is the last point. Good job hanging in there, everybody.

The fifth and final thing we see about restoration in this passage is this, and this will be brief.

Restoration ensures results. verses 12 and 13.

For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace. The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and the trees of the fields shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall 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. And I began today saying that chapters 40 through 55 and Isaiah are ultimately a message of hope amidst despair.

But how could that be? The clear answer in this chapter of Isaiah is through restoration. Yahweh is a God of restoration. And that's what we see in these last two verses.

[36:13] Recall the title of our sermon series, From Sighing to Singing. This is the singing. The U in verse 12 are those who have taken God up on his personal invitation for spiritual restoration.

They have feasted on God's satisfying spiritual nourishment, experienced once again rich covenant blessings and renewed relationship with God. They have sought the Lord and repented from their sin, receiving forgiveness, and have been given assurance from God's word through Christ.

Christ. The physical restoration would come for Israel. He promises that they would go forth and be let go out and be led forth out of exile by the hand of God back into the promised land he gave to them.

The thorn and the briar are replaced by the cypress and the myrtle depicting that a difficult, painful exile would be replaced with beautiful growth and vibrancy.

And spiritual restoration would come too with joy and peace, a deep exuberant joy, a permanent overflowing joy, a joy so great that even the hills are singing and the trees are clapping their hands in proclamation of the wonder and glory of God's restoring work.

[37:45] Oh, how glorious is Yahweh, the earth declares with great rejoicing. And finally, the end of verse, the end of the verse, verse 13.

It shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. What is it? It shall make a name.

What will be the name that will serve as a memorial to the Lord's power and his name? What's the memorial? The restored people of God.

His restored people are his prize. We are his joy, the reward and the evidence of his work of restoration.

restoration. Oh, how marvelous. Oh, how loving our God is. Yahweh is a God of restoration. And when we are restored to him, he's filled with joy.

[38:58] I'll close with this. In Isaiah 55, God offers a personal invitation to restoration. salvation. Maybe there's one particular area of your spiritual life where you need to be restored back to a healthy, peaceful, relational state with God.

Or maybe there are multiple areas or lots and lots. You've seen God's invitation here in our time today, so what will you do about it?

How will you respond? I pray that you will respond by coming to him. Pray with me. Lord, would your word go forth now and cause growth and accomplish that which you desire for it to accomplish?

Would it nourish us and feed our souls that we might live? according to your design. We pray this with confidence through Christ because of Christ and in his name.

Amen.