

# God's Glorious Generosity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, my name is Dave Little, and I'm the youth pastor here, the youth director at St. John's. If you didn't know that already, now you do. It's fantastic.

I'm very excited to be with you here today. And I would just really love to pray with us. Heavenly Father, I pray that your word would accomplish the purpose to which you are sending it. Lord, we pray that your word would be fruitful in our lives. And Lord, I pray that these very words would sink deep into our hearts and we would be transformed by those very words. And we do pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, as a youth director, I get a whole bunch of different invitations. I'm constantly getting invitations. Some of them are absolutely fantastic. They could be invitations to dinner or dessert or coffee. invitations often to be with youth and their families. I get invitations of all sorts.

[ 1 : 03 ] And I love those invitations. I love meeting with people and I love being in the community of God's people. And I love meeting together and praying and studying God's word together. Those are great invitations.

But I often get other kinds of invitations. And they usually come in a package. And it usually is addressed to youth pastor. And when I open them up, they usually have a little letter and then this poster.

And usually the poster says something like this. Awesome youth event! It's so fantastic. We have skiing and paintball and all sorts of awesome things. And it usually has something to the effect that we have the most awesome band ever.

And our speaker is clearly really, really good looking. And he may or may not say anything about Jesus. It will transform your youth group. And there's nothing wrong with having kind of a cool poster.

And there's nothing wrong with having an amazing praise band. And we get that week after week here. There's clearly nothing wrong with having an attractive speaker. The wheels were turning there for a second.

[ 2 : 08 ] I was talking about myself, but I'm joking. But you see, a lot of the time, these invitations, they miss the point. And God does not want us to miss the point of the invitation that he gives us in Isaiah chapter 55.

And this is an incredible, incredible chapter of the Bible. And I don't know if you remember, a couple of weeks ago, Jim preached in Isaiah. And in Isaiah 55, we're remembering that God has sent a child.

I don't know if you remember in Isaiah chapter 9. I'll just read a little bit to you. Do you remember this passage? It's very familiar at Christmastime. For unto us a child is born, a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

And the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. And on the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. I don't know if you remember that a few weeks ago we looked at that passage. And I know it's Christmastime. We celebrate that this child born who is the Lord is in fact Jesus.

[ 3 : 26 ] And so in Isaiah, we're coming through that wonderful passage, remembering that wonderful passage. And also in Isaiah 40 through 55, we encounter this wonderful servant. The servant who takes our sin upon himself.

And by his wounds we are healed. And all we are like sheep gone astray, each of us to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him, on Jesus, the iniquity of us all.

And yes, this is hundreds of years before Jesus. But Isaiah 55 is all about Jesus. So let us not miss the point like some of the invitations I get. This is an invitation to encounter Christ.

So let's take a look. Let's not miss the point. Let's catch the point in this incredible passage of invitation. Turn with me to Isaiah 55 if you already haven't. It's in your pew Bibles.

I think it's on page, what, 63 or something like that. It's page 1341 on my Bible. Let's take a look.

[ 4 : 28 ] It says, 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.

Ooh, that sounds really good. If we stop there, it's like, wow, there's a feast. And it's free. Sounds a lot like my Christmas, you know. I go around mooching from people's awesome feasts. But that we don't miss the point.

It's not actually about food. Although it is about something that satisfies like food, but better. Let's take a listen. Let's keep going. Verse 2. God is actually asking us why we're actually looking after things that don't satisfy.

Listen to this. 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.

Oh, there's something more than just food here. There's something more than just food that is to satisfy us. And if you listen just a little bit further, verse 3, Incline your ear and come to me.

[ 5 : 38 ] Ah, here's the rich food. Here's the richness of the invitation. It is an invitation to come to God and be satisfied by God Himself. And in fact, the bread and the wine and the goodness and the water that we're being invited to is in fact the God of our salvation.

And in fact, these words should ring very familiar to you. Do they ring familiar? Come and take of wine and of bread. Well, are these not the very same words that Jesus says to us that He is the bread of life?

That Jesus Himself is the living water? And that we must actually consume, eat of Jesus' body and of His blood? And that's exactly what we do in communion.

We're coming to Jesus and we're being satisfied in our very souls. So this isn't a kind of food that we eat that tastes really good like cheesecake or something.

This is in fact the very food for our souls. So it's soul food much better than fried chicken, I'd have to tell you. But here we go. Here's how it actually increases our understanding.

[ 6 : 52 ] As we come to Jesus, as we come to this soul food, here, 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. Behold, I made Him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know and a nation you do not know shall run to you because of the Lord your God and of the Holy One of Israel for He has glorified you.

This is a huge picture, a huge invitation. Not just to a small group, but it's a huge kind of national scale invitation to come to God. And it's to come to God, an invitation into His promises.

Into the very covenant promises of God. And as we look back to the covenant promises of God through Abraham, through Moses and through David. This wonderful promise of a king who is to come, who will sit on the throne of David forever.

And you and I are being invited into that promise, that covenant promise which is fulfilled and perfectly satisfying in Jesus Himself. We are being invited to Jesus.

[ 8 : 08 ] What a great invitation. We're being invited to God Himself. And it is for His glory and we are to experience that glory. What a beautiful picture.

Now this invitation, this invitation comes from God Himself to Him. Let's take a look at some of the character of this invitation. We'll flip down a little bit to verse 8.

The character of this invitation has power and it has purpose. That God who is inviting us is inviting us in power for a purpose.

Let's take a look. Verse 8. And this verse comes off of actually putting us in our place. Saying, you know what? We're not quite as great as we think we are. In fact, our ways are nowhere near satisfying.

And this is what it says about God Himself. The One who is inviting us. Verse 8 says, For my thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

[ 9 : 10 ] For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways. And my thoughts than your thoughts. God is saying this invitation to Himself is far greater and far more powerful and far more beautiful.

Because God is infinitely greater. And His way, His invitation to the life in Him and the relationship in Him is far greater than our ways could possibly reach.

And I think the picture is one that actually should boggle your mind. If you ask the question, how far is heaven from earth? Distance-wise or spiritually or dimensionally?

It's so far above and greater than our minds can possibly imagine. That's how great God is. So much greater. So much more holy. So much more awesome than we can possibly imagine.

And that is who is inviting us. That is who is asking us to come and be with Him. Come to Him and be in relationship to Him. In the relationship that He has made.

[ 10 : 16 ] Well, that's pretty powerful. But it's also an invitation that is fruitful and certain. It has power and it has certainty and beautiful fruitfulness.

Look at verse 10. And it's this picture of fruitfulness of God's Word going out. For as the rain and the 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.

The sower is sowing His Word. He's putting out His Word. The very Word of God. Here's the Word that Jesus is sending out. The very Word. And it finds hearts, yes, that are hard to God.

But for many of us, it will find a heart that is open and available to God. And that heart will bear wonderful fruit. And it's that power of the Word going into our hearts and bearing fruit that's the picture of this invitation.

Now listen to the certainty of this invitation, of the power of God's Word. So shall my Word be that goes out from my mouth.

[ 11 : 28 ] It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose. And it shall succeed the thing for which I sent it. As God invites, people will come to faith.

As God brings this invitation into our lives. It will accomplish the purpose for which God is sending it. And what a beautiful confidence we can have.

As we share the Word of God with others. As we love our friends who are not Christians. As we are faithful to God and bring His Word to others. God will accomplish mighty, powerful things.

God's Word does not return to Him empty, but accomplishes. Far beyond what you can imagine. He can transform the hearts of your friends who don't know Him. He can draw in even the hardest of heart.

What a great God we have. And what a fantastic, powerful message we have here. We have the good news that goes out and is powerful.

[ 12 : 33 ] And we can have assurance and certainty that God will accomplish His purposes. Now let's look a little bit about what this invitation is to. So we've got a powerful God who is giving a powerful invitation through His Word.

And as we are called to, to come to Jesus. Let's take a look at what this starts to look like. Verse 12. Verse 12. We get four beautiful things in this small passage in 12 and 13.

The first thing is, you shall go out in joy. For you shall go out in joy. Here's the invitation. Not just to a temporary happiness.

No. To this deep, deep trust and delight in God. To this deep trust and delight in God.

That cannot be swayed by circumstance. That cannot be crashed down by sadness or temporary things. But is in the underlying foundation of our relationship with God.

[ 13 : 37 ] As we come to Him. We will have joy. Because that is what we were made for. Being in relationship with God. And it will give us joy knowing God.

Because He is an awesome, glorious, loving, beautiful God. We will have a joy. Now, you probably know some people who seem to have some of that joy.

And someone comes to mind right away from me. Someone who has gone through far more than I ever have. In terms of being persecuted. And harmed and hurt and in danger for his faith.

And every time I see this guy. He seems to be delighted. He seems to just be in love with God. And he's had a really, really hard go of it.

He has been very... He has suffered very much for his faith. But there is a joy in him. And there can be a joy in us that doesn't... Isn't affected particularly by the circumstances.

[ 14 : 33 ] I can be happy and sad. But underneath it all, I can have a joy in God. That's the first characteristic of what we are invited into. A joy that doesn't end.

It's an everlasting joy. Now and forever. For you shall go out in joy. And be led forth in peace. I don't know if you remember.

A few weeks ago, Jim talked about this peace. And it is... It is what our hearts yearn for and long for. Is peace with our God. Because our sin...

And our ways that are not our ways... That are not his ways. Our sin and our selfishness keep us from God. There is a wall. There is a distance that is actually un...

Unreachable. We cannot pass that distance. But there is a peace that we are being invited to in Jesus Christ. Because Jesus on the cross... Becomes our sin that we would have righteousness.

[ 15 : 33 ] That we would have peace with God now and forever. Jesus becomes our sin that we would become righteousness. That we would have peace. Those who are far off and those who are near...

Jesus brings us peace. Jesus brings us peace through his shed blood on the cross. He takes our judgment on him. That we may have now right relationship with God.

For you shall go in joy and be led forth in peace. And the third thing is a picture of all of creation being in praise. Listen to this.

And the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing. And all the trees and the fields shall clap their hands. There is this picture of...

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. The heavens declare the glory of God. There is this praise that we are being invited into.

[ 16 : 32 ] We are being invited into a relationship with God. Who is God. Who is holy and righteous and perfect. And so far above us and so far greater. We are being invited to praise the one who is worthy of all praise.

And that is what we were made for. And our lips and our lives would set forth the praise of God. That is what we are being invited into. That is what we are being invited into.

And the fourth thing in this passage is restoration. Listen to this beautiful picture of transformation and restoration. Verse 13.

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.

Oh there is joy. And there is peace. And there is praise. And God's heart is that there will be restoration. That there will be transformation.

[ 17 : 32 ] That which is dry and dead. Like the thorn in the briar. Will be transformed into these beautiful fruitful trees.

Powerful and strong. And that will be a sign that will glorify the name of God. And it is an everlasting sign. It is an everlasting restoration of creation.

And we are invited into it. You and I are being invited into this restoration. This incredible picture of restoration and transformation.

Well that is fantastic. That is an incredible invitation. How do we accept this invitation?

How do we say yes? Let's take a look back through the passage. And we will be led in how we do this. Let's look back at verse 1. And ironically I am thirsty.

[ 18 : 36 ] So I am going to read it to you. Come everyone who thirsts. This is very dramatic. Come to the waters. Come to everyone who thirsts.

Here is the picture. That we need God. That as we hear the invitation. We want to get down on our knees and say.

God I thirst for you. I long for you. I long for your transformation. I long for your restoration. To restore me. To be what I truly am.

I long for you God. And Jesus. In the passage that I read without the microphone. It says. Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden.

And I will refresh you. And Jesus himself says. I am the living waters. Jesus says. I am the bread of life. We are called to come to Jesus.

[ 19 : 35 ] To long for Jesus. To want to be with Jesus. That is what we are made for. To be with God. So how do we.

How do we start to receive this invitation. We say. God. I thirst for you. I need you. I need you. I want you to see. And I think you probably do.  
It is coming to him. To his waters. He who has no money. Come and buy and eat. Come and buy wine and milk. Without money. Without price. Huh.  
This is a thirst for God. And a God. Who is a God of grace. To know that God provides it all. He has done it all. That he provides. And he paid the price on the cross.  
Come to God. The God of grace. Come to him. Come be with him. Thirst and long for his grace. His mercy.

[ 20 : 31 ] Don't think I can do it. Because your ways and my ways. They are not his ways. His ways. Are the way of taking care. The covenant promise. Bringing you to him. He has done it all. All you need to do is long for him.

And ask him. Verse 6. Continues this incredible thought. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him. While he is near.

How do we respond to this invitation? Call on Jesus. Call out to him. Jesus I need you. I want you. I want to be with you. I want to receive your forgiveness on the cross.

I want to receive your restoration. Your peace. Your joy. I want to praise you. I lived in Charlotte for four years. And it is the home city of Billy Graham.

I don't know if you know this. And if you don't know who Billy Graham is. He is one of the great evangelists of the last century. And man. Everything in Charlotte seems to be named after him. He is kind of like its favorite son.

[ 21 : 32 ] You know the streets and radio stations. And all sorts of things. And there is actually a library. Which is more like a museum. But in the Billy Graham library. You can walk through his gospel ministry.

And you stop off and you hear him preaching the word. And you stop off in another place in the world. He is preaching the word. And it is all through this kind of. This little travel through Billy Graham's ministry.

And almost at every stop. As he proclaimed the gospel. The good news of Jesus. Who came to bring salvation. Who is salvation itself. Who is our savior.

As he proclaimed this message. To thousands upon thousands in stadiums. Incredible. Incredible ministry. He almost always said this. Today may be a day.

That God is warming your heart in a way that he never has before. Today may be that day that you receive. You come to Jesus. And call out to Jesus. And say. Jesus you are the Lord.

[ 22 : 33 ] I want to receive your forgiveness. And that is a lot like what this passage is saying. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Here is a time. Maybe today for you. For me. This is a day that God is speaking to us.

In a way that he. Maybe never has before. He is near. He is here. This may be the day for you. If you have never received Christ. That you say. Lord I want to call out to you.

I thirst for you. I long for you. I need you. Today may be that day. Maybe God has. Has put his fruitful word to your heart. And it wants to bear fruit. Maybe today is the day you receive Christ.

Seek the Lord while he may be found. And call on him when he is near. And we call to God. We cry out to God. And we repent. Verse 7. Let the wicked forsake his way.

And the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. What a great picture of repentance. When we come to Christ. When we long for him. And say Jesus I need you.

[ 23 : 34 ] We need to turn away from our selfishness. And our sin. And the ways of this world. And turn to God's ways. Who are far beyond our ways. And take our thoughts and say.

God I don't want to be thinking this way anymore. I want Lord God. For you to transform my mind. Transform my heart. Transform my ways. I need to turn away from this wickedness.

And acknowledge it as sin. And come to you Lord. Turn to you God. I want to turn to you in repentance. And faith. And trust in you. But it is also an invitation.

This is how we accept it. We say you know what. God has compassion on us. Listen to this. Let him return to the Lord. That he may have compassion on him. And to our God.

For he will abundantly pardon. We are being invited. Into the compassion. And love. And grace. Of God.

[ 24 : 31 ] And we are being invited. Into forgiveness. We are being invited. To forsake our ways. And turn to God.

And say Lord. I need your forgiveness. I need to be in relationship with you. I was made to praise you. I want that joy. I need to be satisfied. My soul longs for you. It is not satisfied. In anything else. In this world. That money. Or power. Or even fun activities. My soul is only satisfied. In Christ himself. And I trust in that work. On the cross. Because. The forgiveness. And pardon. Of God. Is found on that cross. Is perfectly found. On that cross. And that is what Jesus. Is inviting you to. This evening. What Isaiah 55. Is all about. It is all about. [ 25 : 29 ] An invitation. To the cross of Christ. To receive Jesus. To receive that restoration. For your soul. To be satisfied in God. Alone.

Well. What does it look like. In 2011. Well. It is the same. As it looked like. In 2010. And will look like. In 2012. And look like. In the time of Isaiah. Hundreds of years. B.C. Six. Seven hundred years. Before. Christ. What does it look like. As you receive. This invitation. As you desire. To accept it. And receive that. By calling out to God. And it is restoration. God. Wants to restore you. To what you truly are. To bear the image of God himself. To be. Seeking after God.

[ 26 : 27 ] In joy. In peace. And praise. He wants to restore you. Now if you have never. Received Christ. Today is the day. That you can receive him.

And be restored. Restored to that place. That transformative place. Where you can. Be in the presence of God. Now and forever. Know the very love of God. Now and forever. But for many of us. Who are Christians. There are. Areas of deep hurt. There are. Areas of dryness. In our lives. That this year. That this year. I believe God wants to restore. And bring life. Where there is dryness. And death. Confusion and hurt. God wants to bring transformation. And life. God wants to restore you. And it's that continual work. Of restoration. In our lives.

[ 27 : 22 ] That God wants to bring us. As we come to him. In joy. In praise. In peace. He wants to restore us. He wants to bring us life. And it's not only for. For you.

Because he does want to restore you. But he wants to do it. For this. World as well. He wants to bring your friends. He wants to bring your enemies. He wants to bring this city. And this country. And this world. Into that place. Of full restoration. That we get a taste of. In this passage. But we'll only. Truly find its fulfillment. When Christ comes again. Behold. You called a nation. That you do not know. And a nation. That did not know you. Shall run to you. Isn't that a great picture. As we trust. And follow Jesus. That people will come. To know him. And run to Jesus. And be with Jesus. And accept. That powerful invitation.

[ 28 : 17 ] That shall not return empty. So for us. It's a constant. Prayer.

And a constant. Call for us. And a constant invitation. Seek the Lord. While he may be found. Call upon him. When he is near. Let the wicked. Forsake his way. Repent. And the unrighteous man. His thoughts. Let him return. To the Lord. That he may have compassion. His love and compassion on you. He loves you. And to our God. For he will abundantly. Pardon. Heavenly Father. We thank you for your invitation. Lord. Lord. Lord. We want that joy. And that peace. That praise. In our heart. Lord.

[ 29 : 15 ] We need your restoration. And transformation. In our lives. Bring our lives from. Places where there is dryness. And deadness. Bring your living waters.

Jesus. To us. That we may have life again. Restore those places of unforgiveness. And bring your forgiveness. God. God. And Lord. For those of us. Who do not know you yet. Lord. Perhaps this is the day. That we will receive you. And receive your invitation. To the cross. Your grace. And forgiveness. Lord Jesus. Once again. For many of us. We come to you. And call you. Lord and Savior. Lord. We receive your invitation. Help us to come to you. And be transformed. We do pray this. In Jesus name. Amen.