

Seek the Lord While He may Be Found

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[0 : 00] Will you turn with me now for a few moments to the chapter that we read, Isaiah chapter 55, and we'll read again verses 6, 7, and 8. Isaiah 55, verses 6, 7, and 8.

We read, Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on 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. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

Now, at this time, I think that God is certainly speaking to the world. Because we have the various things that happen throughout the world, and God is speaking to us all.

There's flooding in Pakistan, mudslides in China, there's a nuclear threat from Iran, there's the credit crisis hitting the West, depression is on the increase amongst ordinary people, and we're told that it is the illness of the coming ten years.

[1 : 24] There's also the problem of unemployment, and there is the problem, of course, of falling numbers coming to church.

Our own nation seems to have drifted away from God altogether, and seems to have expelled God from our very lives.

And our society seems to worship at the altar of money and sport and power and all of that. So, really, this, I feel, is a good time to take stock of our own commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. That Christians, non-Christians, and those who are not sure, that we all have a reality check to see how we're getting on in our lives.

And I look to what I would call an evangelistic sermon to do just that. To make us examine ourselves, to reawaken us, and also to draw in those who do not yet know the Lord.

[2 : 41] Because a sermon like that shows us the magnificence of the Lord's plan for saving men, women, and children.

We see in God's call to the unconverted, God's call to the world, we see his love and his mercy, and his burning desire that sinners be drawn away from their own lifestyle, from their own lemming-like rush, into a lost eternity, into the pains of hell.

And that they be drawn into the bliss of heaven that he offers to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he does this, reaching out to us, by giving Jesus his own son, to die on the cross of Calvary, to be man's substitute, to pay what heaven's justice demanded for all our rebellion against him.

We see the love of a father who gave his own son. And we see the love of a son who willingly came. And we take it as a personal message to you and to me.

And although we may have been Christian for years, that we re-examine our own Christianity and our own commitment in order that we will be able to play our part in stemming the darkness that is threatening to overcome our land and the whole world.

[4 : 21] We pray that believers and non-believers alike will be awakened to our own condition. and we look to the Holy Spirit to awaken us all.

That we may more and more see the many lost souls on the highway of life and not just ignore them any longer.

And that we may accept our responsibilities to witness wherever we may be, at work or at play. And that we may step up our prayer life.

And that we will be able to reach out to the lost. That non-believers be awakened to their own condition. To see the brevity of time.

And maybe hear the gospel message, the gospel invitation in a way that they've never heard before. And in a way that they can no longer ignore.

[5 : 23] The Prince of Glory, the Son of God that lies there on the cross at Calvary. And he goes and he dies and he rises again on the third day.

And all that for you and for me and for them. And we have to begin to take it really seriously. And that preachers also ourselves be reminded of our responsibility.

that this may be the last time that some people in the congregation will hear the gospel message and it may be the last time that the preacher will preach a sermon because of a surety that day is coming.

Isaiah was God's prophet, God's spokesman, giving God's word to the people of Israel. to the people of Israel in his day and also God's word to all generations of time.

Isaiah as a prophet speaks more of the Lord Jesus Christ than any other prophet. And his book is often referred to as the gospel according to Isaiah.

[6 : 37] And we are able to trace Christ's birth, death, and resurrection in his prophecy. And he tells us of God's plan of salvation through the sacrifice of his own son.

So the book is full of encouragement and it's loved by believers and is very helpful and inviting to others, to those who do not yet believe.

And Isaiah sets things out very clearly. He sets it out before us. And he calls on all to reach out and accept and receive what is freely offered by God.

Mercy and pardon through the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own son. And our text is just such an appeal. It's very, very similar to Christ's own appeal when he tells of the parable of the great supper in Luke chapter 14 where he says come for everything is now ready.

Meaning that the hour of grace has struck and it's time for action. God is reaching out his hand to you and to me.

[7 : 57] It's time to grasp it. God is seeking you. He wants you. He wants me. And notice the urgency of the message.

The time is limited. The message gives us seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. Oh yes, salvation is free.

Salvation is a gift of God's grace. Everything has been done for us by the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. But here before us we have a divine exhortation from God himself to seek it.

We have to do something. It's all available. But we have to do something. And notice seek the Lord. Our business is not with the church, not with the minister or any man.

Our business is between God and us. everything is ready. And now we're called on to seek Jesus the Savior.

[9 : 06] And he's made available for us. He's to be found in the gospel message. And the day of the gospel is now. And as we are gathered here today and as we get gathered here over this weekend to remember him in particular studying his word who knows how long we've got.

Because the very tone of the exhortation tells us and warns us that Jesus will not always be available to us. How long has he been available to each one of us up till now?

How long will he be available with all the things that we are able to see and understand?

Deterioration of mind where we wouldn't be able to grasp the gospel message.

Hardness of heart where we reached a stage where we could no longer accept whatever. It's reasonable to assume that Jesus will not always be available for us.

There is a limited time set for us to seek the Lord. Or if God had given us five minutes in which to make up our mind, maybe we would make more of an effort to concentrate on the whole matter of salvation.

[10 : 30] But all God's own mercy in giving us a lifetime and giving us plenty time. In his mercy he gives us time.

We have abused that very mercy by ignoring it for a while.

or listening to the devil's song in our ears of not yet, not yet, there's no hurry. Call on him while he is near.

That tells us he is near at certain times. And we call to call upon him then. The gospel preaching is near then.

He's promised to be where two or three are gathered in his name. he promised to be with those who speak about him. He draws near. The same way they did to the two on the road to Emmaus.

[11 : 29] They were talking about him and the next happenings of the weekend and Jesus himself drew near. So when we gather two or three of us together in the street or in the homes, he draws near.

At church, prayer meetings, communion time in particular, there are times when he is near. Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was passing by and he cried out immediately, seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call on him while he is near. Oh, if you do hear that and if you do understand it, my friend, please, please, take it to heart and assess your situation before the Lord like an athlete getting tuned up for something.

Don't forsake the training and get fit for the Lord's work because he depends on you. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. We're called upon to leave our thoughts and our ways. that is thoughts and ways about salvation.

[12 : 50] God is calling on us to leave our own way of salvation, to leave our own thoughts and salvation, forget our own plans on how our sins may be pardoned, how we may be saved, how we can make peace with God.

And the reason that we leave our thoughts and our ways behind is that we don't do things God's way. not think in God's way. Every unbeliever has a way of escape made up for him or her in his or her own mind.

Nobody can truthfully say, oh, I'm going to a lost eternity. My home, my eternal home is the pains of hell. Nobody can really say that truthfully.

Everyone has an avenue of escape. some say that God will not condemn any of his own created beings because God is a God of love and God is mercy and he will not condemn any of his own beings.

Some say that at the end of the lives here that is total annihilation, that once they're buried, that's it, pull the covers over me and there's nothing else. Some say we're doing our best and God sees we're not too bad, at least we're not as bad as many other people.

[14 : 17] But these are the very thoughts and plans and arguments that God tells us to forsake this very day. So whatever your way is, my friend, please forsake it.

Walk away from it and accept God's way and do it now. God's way of justifying his sinners through the death and resurrection of his own son Jesus Christ.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. You don't need to know any other text in the whole of scripture because that one text will rise up and condemn those who do not listen to it.

If they know that one text it's all there. God's love. God's own dealings with people. Whatever your thoughts my friend, let them go.

Ah, but you see, self-righteousness comes in and self-righteousness comes into the Christian's life as well. Self-righteousness you see, is ingrained in our very nature and how unwilling we are to leave our own thoughts to leave our own ways, to leave our own arguments, to leave our own excuses and simply accept the dusty road of Calvary as the only way of salvation, the only road to glory.

[15 : 53] Coming with nothing whatsoever, nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling. Coming, God, be merciful to me as sinner.

but notice it's not enough to forsake our own thoughts and our own ways. It's not enough to reform our own lifestyle and live a decent life and to live a good life from now on because just by reforming our lives that would mean that we're doing it ourselves, that we're depending on our own efforts and that's making the same mistake as before.

Our text calls upon us to turn to the Lord, to return to the Lord. It means that we've been on a road leading away from God, away from the Lord Jesus Christ and we're to forsake that way and we're to turn to Jesus.

Turn ye, turn ye, why should ye die? That's the message from heaven. And it is for our encouragement the certainty of forgiveness.

Let him return to the Lord that he may have compassion on a man to our God for he will abundantly pardon. Remember Jonah when he preached God's message to Nineveh and the king of Nineveh took it to heart and he dressed in sackcloth and ashes and ordered the whole country.

[17 : 28] to turn and to be sorrowful for the way that they had lived and his thoughts were who can tell that God can be merciful and the whole city was saved on the strength of that who can tell just the faint flimsiest hope in God's mercy and the city was saved God's love.

You see if we preached an indefinite result of turning it would still be our responsibility to preach it. If we preached and said that only a few of you would be saved we'd still have to do it.

But when there is absolute certainty of forgiveness and free pardon guaranteed then surely those who ignore or refuse to accept God's way are willfully and deliberately committing suicide eternal everlasting suicide eternally lost because they will not listen to the word of God.

Surely anyone who hears the word of God is without excuse. Because the mercy laid up for the repentant sinner in Christ is sure mercy.

None who have come to him have ever been turned away empty. Nobody has ever been discarded who has come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary Magdalene out of whom he had cast devils.

[19 : 05] The woman taken in adultery. Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. Saul of Tarsus with his head in the dust of the Damascus road.

Hears Jesus talking to him and he hears in a way that makes him Paul a great planter of churches. They all found mercy.

Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out. That's what is the message and that's what's borne out by Christ's own life in this world.

Abundant pardon speaks to everybody. It speaks to all sinners but surely especially it speaks to the big sinner the one whose sins are many the one whose sins are of long standing so what it says is whatever your sinful condition my friend no matter how hard and stubborn your heart may be no matter how long you've been on that condition this is especially for you that there is abundant pardon or if there was a limited pardon on offer there be reason to fear but the pardon that is available through the Lord Jesus Christ is more than sufficient it is to the uttermost it is to the uttermost degree of sin and to the uttermost degree of quantity Jesus stood in the believer's place and took

God's wrath and judgment on himself and God's justice is satisfied and God says I will have mercy God says I will freely pardon and how about the backslider oh yes there is pardon for you my friend when you turn back to Jesus because it is free abundant pardon it is pardon upon pardon it's a multiplication of pardons whatever your thoughts whatever your ways if you do not know Christ as your saviour my friend please please turn to him now he's to be found now he's near now on this communion weekend whatever you've done whatever your degree of sin is it is all covered by his free abundant pardon oh we must all hear the gospel bell ringing come and welcome for he will have mercy on you he will freely pardon how long may we go on and sin how long will God forbear where does hope end and where begins the confines of despair an answer from the sky says sin ye that from God depart while it is called today repent and harden not your heart it is a call to each one of us to reawaken that

[22 : 23] Christians do not sort of go peacefully into glory knowing knowing that they are alright when there are lost souls out there and not only out here but round about as a whole nation drifting into a dangerous situation and that non-Christians may examine and see the seriousness of the situation because indifference and apathy have taken over and we are all content to live from day to day doing our little bit we must take on the powers of darkness and reach out with the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the saviour of sinners oh Lord Jesus we ask that you bless each and every one of us and re-instill in us a love for you because we know that often our love grows cold and we are content just to drift along doing day by day what we've always done yes good things but Lord let us have a reality check could I do more is there somebody who doesn't know is there somebody who could say you knew and you didn't tell me

Lord help us with that reality check and may it be that as we come to the table tomorrow we come rejoicing in a risen saviour ready to take on the world in the name of Christ we ask it in your name Amen