

The Compassion of the Lord

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[0 : 00] Please turn back to our reading in Isaiah 55. And this evening I want to look at some of the teaching of the whole chapter, famous chapter.

Just read again at the beginning. 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 and so on.

Now this is a chapter of scripture that is full of the gospel. We believe that scripture is one story with one savior.

And the Old Testament preaches the same gospel as the New Testament. So this is a chapter full of good news and full of pictures of what the gospel means in the lives of those who trust the Savior.

Now I want you to see how this chapter fits in with the chapters before it. In chapter 53, we have the good news of a servant.

[1 : 34] You all know the passage about the suffering servant, beginning actually in, we say Isaiah 53, but it begins in chapter 52 and verse 19.

Behold my servant. This suffering servant, this successful servant who gives his life and who is raised back to life and who changes lives.

Read that passage again and you see the servant. But it also in chapter 54 gives us good news again in terms of the outcome of the servant's work.

He's going to have a people and they're pictured in the first part of chapter 54 in the imagery of marriage and home. And then from verse 11 and following in the imagery of a city.

A city of tremendous beauty and tremendous security. These are the people who know the servant and so they become part of God's family and God's city because of the work of the servant.

[2 : 54] I want you to notice if you've never seen it before, that the section in 52, 13 about the servant with a capital S begins, of course, behold my servant.

And then chapter 54 about his people ends with, this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.

As it were, with a small s in the plural. So 53 is about the servant and the unique work that he does. 54 is about his servants, his people who come to know him and who love to serve him.

So then chapter 55 is telling us how we can become the servants of the servant.

How we can become part of the family of God and part of the city of God and know the blessings of God that begin now and will continue forever in the new heavens and the new earth.

[4 : 10] How can you become a servant of the servant, the suffering servant? Well, this chapter tells you.

Let's look at the chapter under five headings as time allows. I'll try not to be as long as I was the other time.

Number one of five. An amazing author. From the beginning of the chapter to the middle of verse three.

An amazing author. It's the free author of the gospel. And it's an offer that comes to sinners, to men and women and boys and girls, from the lips of God himself.

Now we all know what it is to have an invitation that perhaps excites us. We're thrilled to be going to some wedding or some Christmas event or whatever it might be.

[5 : 21] Here is an invitation to the ultimate party, as it were. There's none better than this invitation and this offer.

I want you to see how warm the welcome is in verse one. Look at the repeated come, come, come. It's urgent.

It's enthusiastic. It's passionate. It's insistent. God wants you to come. And it is God it comes from.

If you look from the middle of verse two into verse three. Where he says, listen to me. Give ear to me.

Come to me. Hear me. That your soul may live. Who else can promise to make your soul live but God?

[6 : 22] And it's God who's saying, listen to me. Give ear to me. Come to me. He's calling us into a living relationship with himself.

You see, it's pictured in terms of a feast, a banquet, a party. Verse one. There's plenty to drink.

An invitation to the spiritually thirsty to come and to drink. Whenever I hear this kind of invitation scripture to the thirsty.

I think of C.S. Lewis and the silver chair in the Narnia stories. It's Jill who sees water when she's desperately thirsty.

But then she sees a lion. And she's afraid. And the lion speaks and encourages her to come nearer and to drink. But she's so afraid.

[7 : 28] Then eventually she says, I suppose I'll have to find some other water. And the lion says, there is no other water.

In terms of the water that she needs. There is no other water. Here there's water.

And there's wine. And there's milk. Why the three? Perhaps because three kinds of drink doing three different things.

Water to quench my thirst. Wine to gladden my heart. And milk to nourish me.

To feed me. Tonight it would be a great thing. If we all prayed for the right kind of thirst. To want what is on offer here.

[8 : 28] To pray that we might be led to drink here. And of course to pray that other people might be led to be thirsty.

And to come and to drink. And there's also lots to eat. Middle of verse 2. The best of food. It's all good.

It's the richest of fair. You know the world is full of spiritual junk food. And Isaiah has spoken early in his prophecy of people who worship false gods.

And he says what they're doing is eating ashes. Ashes. What a thing to do. To eat. Ashes. It's such a waste of time.

But here we're being offered real food. Good food. The richest of fair. A banquet. A feast. We all know the kind of food we like.

[9 : 31] We all know the kind of invite we would like. And what we would love to see on the table. And God is saying spiritually. This is better than you could ever imagine.

This is the ultimate food. At the ultimate banquet. It's a banquet for the soul. The amazing thing is there's nothing to pay.

He says it. Without money. And without price. It's free grace. We can't buy God's favor.

We can't earn that favor. But someone else has paid for it. That's why I wanted at the beginning to stress Isaiah 53.

And then Isaiah 55. This chapter is possible. Because of Isaiah 53. The free offer is possible.

[10 : 33] Because the servant paid the price. In his own blood. So that we could have the free offer of the gospel.

Jesus did it all. Someone else has paid for it. You perhaps know that experience of somebody saying. You can go and give my name. I've had the experience anyway.

Once. You can go and give my name. And have whatever you want. And tell them. So and so is picking up the tab. That's what we're being told here.

The servant has picked up the tab. And so we can have this free grace. Free gratis. And all that's on offer.

For absolutely nothing. And we remember of course. That this is fulfilled. In Jesus. And we remember that Jesus spoke in this way.

[11 : 31] Matthew 11. Come to me all who are weary and burdened. And I will give you rest. Or more than once in John's gospel. I am the bread of life.

He who comes to me will never go hungry. He who believes in me will never be thirsty. Or again in John. If anyone is thirsty let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me. Want you to notice something else before we move on here. Sometimes people think that it's Christians who have the difficult questions to answer.

When I was in St. Andrews. The Christian Union would put on events. Where anybody. All comers could come and. We called them grill a Christian. You could come along.

Whatever your point of view. And you could ask. A Christian. Any question you wanted. About the Bible or Christianity or whatever. So we called them grill a Christian.

[12 : 32] And people came. And asked their questions. But it's the. Sinner here. Who has the difficult questions to answer. So often in the Bible.

Because it said to them in verse 2. Why are you spending your money. On what doesn't satisfy you. Why do you work so hard.

For what does not satisfy. You. Why all the effort. Chasing things that will never ever meet.

Your deepest needs. It's a very important question. Before we move on. Let me tell you. One of my favorite.

Stories. It's from the second world war. And it's about. Bread. A soldier told this story. He often told this story.

[13 : 31] Little boy had been out playing. And wandered far away from his home. And when he came back towards the area where he lived. He could see that. Bombs. Had.

Destroyed. A lot of that area. And his home was rubble. And he began to wander. He didn't know what to do. Wander through the rubble. Destruction. And he came up to a little bakery.

Quite a distance away. That was still in business. And he looked through the window. And he was so hungry. And he scraped off a circle of frost.

And he looked inside. What could he do. Except. Luke. And long. And a soldier happened to pass by. Noticed the boy.

And said. Would you like to have one of these? And the wee boy nodded his head. The soldier went inside. And bought a few freshly baked rolls.

[14 : 29] Then came out and handed the bag to the little boy. And the boy said. But I've got no money. And the soldier said. It's free.

I've paid. And I hope you won't take this the wrong way. But I'll just tell you exactly what the boy said. In his amazement. The soldier said.

It's free. I've paid. And the little boy. Clutched the warm bag to his chest. Looked up at the soldier. And asked. Mister.

Are you God? The boy was so overcome. That he thought the Lord himself. Had come to meet him. In his hour of need.

And of course that's what God has done in the gospel. God has come to provide us. With the bread of life. And it's free. All we need to do.

[15 : 26] Is to come. And to take. And to eat. To put our trust in Jesus. And receive the free offer. Of full forgiveness.

For all our sins. Forever. And forever. An amazing offer. Secondly. An amazing covenant. From the middle of verse 3.

To 5. And I will make with you. An everlasting covenant. Now this is another.

Amazing thing. There were lots of. Covenants. In the Bible. That people made with one another. It was a thing you did. You could come into an agreement. Two people could do it.

Or. Two countries could do it. They. Covenanted. Together. And came into some kind of. Relationship. Or made a treaty. But here we're being told.

[16 : 26] About an everlasting covenant. That God makes. That God puts himself. Under obligation. That he makes a binding promise.

And offers an everlasting bond. That's what a covenant is. A bond. A bond. And it's forever. And forever. And forever.

And forever. The bond is made here. For us. I think that's the language. In the middle of verse 3. I will make. For you.

Or in favor of you. An everlasting covenant. God is saying. To those to whom he offers the gospel. You can have.

A binding. Everlasting. Bond. With me. And you'll enjoy. All the blessings. Of my. Covenant.

[17 : 25] Now. How can that be ours? Well. Again. The answer to the question. Is. Jesus. Jesus. The Lord.

Jesus Christ. You see the language. It's my. Sure. Love. For. David. And it's picking up. In the covenant story.

Of. David. The king. And his dynasty. But in scripture. David. Becomes a way. Of speaking. About the Messiah. Because David. Is long gone.

Here. So. Who's the David. Who's going to come. The. David. Who was king. Isn't going to come back. Himself. But he was just a pointer.

To the real king. To another David. As it were. To a greater David. The covenant king. Who would. Deserve the blessings.

[18:20] Of the covenant. And who would receive them. For us. And who would bestow them. On us. So. It's saying to people. That if they put their trust.

In this. New David. I mean. At that time. Isaiah saying. Put your trust. In the God. Who will send this David. But now.

As we look back. We can see. That this David. Has been fulfilled. In Jesus. The real king. So we're being told. If you put your trust. In Jesus. Then you are in.

An everlasting. Relationship. That is. Guaranteed. Guaranteed. By God. Himself. You can see. In verses 4 and 5.

I won't go into them now. But it's for the whole world. It's for the peoples. It's for the nations. And people are going to. Run to this David.

[19:19] Because of the Lord. His God. And because they see. The glory of God. In him. Verse 5. You see. You. Him. Is singular.

I think it's a reference. To the king. Some think it's a reference. To. As it were. The church. And that when people see. The glory. Of.

The church. The people of God. When. When God's people shine. With. With love. And compassion. Then. People are attracted. By that. To the church.

That's a possible way. Of understanding it. Very challenging. Application. Isn't it? But I think the best way. Is simply to think of. You there. In verse 5. As the king.

And he will call people. And when he calls people. People will run to him. Because he is the one. In whom glory dwells. The glory.

[20:16] Of grace. And truth. So that's an amazing covenant. Isn't it? That in Jesus. We can have something today. That will last forever.

And forever. And forever. We're coming up to Christmas. When so many things. That people get. Will.

Feel. Past their date. A few days later. A few weeks later. A few months later. With all the. Built in obsolescence.

Of our age. But here. We're being offered. A present. And a person. Who will be. Ours.

Forever. And all the blessings. Of God. Sealed. By the blood. Of Jesus. The blood. Of the covenant. Remember. An everlasting covenant.

[21:13] It's looking. To what Jesus. Would do. When he shed. The blood. Of the covenant. And in the blood. Of the covenant. All the blessings. And commitments. And promises. Of God.

Are yes. And amen. In Christ. So if you come. To trust. In Jesus. You have something. That will last. Forever. And forever.

And forever. It's an amazing thing. That God is willing. To bind himself. To sinners like us. And he says. I'll never go back.

In my word. To you. I will bind myself. Irrevocably. To you. And I will never go back. In my word. And I will never let you go.

And my commitment to you. Is eternal. Sealed. In the blood. Of my own son. Trust me on this. God says. I will never.

[22:09] Ever. Let you. Down. That's an amazing covenant. It's everlasting. And it's offered. In Jesus. Thirdly.

An amazing. Pardon. In verses. Six and seven. An amazing. Pardon. I think the focus. Here now. Seek the Lord. Is on. What. We are called. To do. In response. To the gospel. We've had a little.

Of that already. But. The emphasis was. On. The Lord. Seeking us. But now. It's. You seek. The Lord. It's the human. Responsibility.

To repent. And to come. To God. Quickly. Look at the challenge. To repentance. Here. A challenge. To. My life.

[23 : 03] Let the wicked. Forsake. His way. Repentance. Means. A lifestyle. Shift. A new. Way. Of living. Going. In a new. Direction.

And it's also. A challenge. To the mind. And the unrighteous. Man. His. Thoughts. Repentance. Is a change. Of mind.

Every Christian. Knows that. When you hear people. Give their testimony. They'll often say. I used to think. Like this. About God. Or. I thought. This about the Bible. Or I thought.

This about the church. Or I thought. This about Jesus. Or I thought. It's about their minds. And then they said. But. Everything changed. And now. I think differently.

About the Bible. I think differently. About my sins. I think differently. About Jesus. I think differently. About the church. God. Changes. Our minds. So here.

[23 : 57] There's a challenge. To life. And of course. Behind that. Is the mind. That governs the life. And we're told. Positively. Let him return.

To the Lord. We're called. To come back. To God. And to ask him. For mercy. And God. Guarantees.

To answer. That. Prayer. That's another. Wonderful thing. If you pray. To God. To forgive. Your sins. God.

Will never. Say no. If you want. To know. A prayer. Lots of things. We pray for. And the Lord. Might say. That's not my will. At the moment. Or we actually.

Receive the answer. No. To that prayer. But here's a prayer. That God. Always says yes to. Pray the prayer. He always says yes to. Which is.

[24 : 53] Forgive me. Have mercy on me. Lord. Remember me. And God. Always. Promises. To answer. That prayer.

Of a penitent. Sinner. And the passage here. In verses. Six and seven. Is full of encouragements. To repentance.

Notice it. Verse six. While he may be found. While he is near. While he may be found.

In this age. Which is a day of grace. Earlier Isaiah has talked about. The day of salvation. And Paul picks up on that.

In the New Testament. And quotes it. Now is the time. Of salvation. Now is the day of salvation. The age in which we live. Is the day of salvation.

[25 : 50] While he may. Be found. So it's in this age. And it's in this life. Life. There's no second chance.

Beyond the grave. According to the Bible. You only have one shot. At life. This is it. But you live. In an age of grace.

In an age of the gospel. And you're still alive. In this world. And so you have. A shot. At eternity. God.

May. Be found. By you. Now. And while he is near. Well he comes near. When people hear the gospel.

He comes near also. Sometimes in the providences of life. Opportunities that people have. To reflect on the big things of life.

[26 : 48] Something goes wrong. And they. They're pulled up. And they begin to think. About the way they've been living. Or about life. Or about the future. Or what lies beyond.

And that's God. Through providence. Arresting them. And speaking to them. And coming near to them. It's a wonderful thing. When God comes near.

In life. And when God comes near. In the offer of the gospel. And when you can feel. He's coming near. And you're being called. To reach out.

And touch him. In faith. Because he. Is passing. By. There's also tremendous. Encouragement to repentance. In these two verses.

When we read that. Our God. At the end of verse 7. will. Abundantly. Pardon. It's not.

[27 : 45] He may pardon. Or he'll pardon. 50% of those who come. Or he'll pardon. Everyone. But only. Some of their sins. It's.

He will pardon. The whole lot. And he'll do it. For everyone who comes. Everybody. The penitent. Are guaranteed.

Forgiveness. He absolutely. Will. Pardon. All of them. And it's. Full forgiveness. Isaiah is full of pictures. Of full forgiveness.

Chapter 1. Though your sins are scarlet. They'll be white as snow. Though they're red as crimson. They'll be like wool. Chapter 43. Chapter 43. He blots out our sins.

And remembers them no more. Chapter 44. They're like the morning mist. And a wee while later you say. It's gone. Where's it gone?

[28 : 40] God uses these pictures and others to say. I will deal with all your sins. Absolutely. With full forgiveness.

In fact some. That I was looking at. Say that the language here. Is that God. Will. Multiply. Pardon. When it says he will abundantly pardon.

He will. Multiply. Pardon. God is into. Multiplication. God is not. Stingy. In forgiveness.

God doesn't. Hold back. God forgives. The whole thing. And he does it for. Every. Single. Person. Who comes to him.

In repentance. And simply says. Please. Forgive. Me. My. Sins. And the Lord's reply is. Done.

[29 : 38] Sorted. They're forgiven. And forgotten. Forever. I'll never mention them. Again. That is.

An amazing. Pardon. And it's the pardon that's offered. To everyone. Who comes. To God. Fourthly. Quickly. An amazing mind.

Verses. Eight and nine. An amazing. Mind. Remember. Verses. Six and seven. Had. Talked about. The sinner.

Need to. Change his ways. And his thoughts. Now. The language. Of ways. And thoughts. Are. Applied. To God. You can see. In verses.

Eight and nine. And we're being told. That God's thoughts. And God's ways. Are so different. From. Ours. What is that.

[30 : 36] Talking about. Well. If it's. Connected. With what came. Before. It might. Be saying. Something again. About.

Grace. That God's. Thoughts. And ways. Are not ours. In other words. That God. Is really. Gracious. I mean.

If somebody. Comes to us. Who has. Ignored us. Or. Talked about us. Or. Hated us. Or done bad things. To us.

Or. You know. For months. For years. We would find it. Very hard. To forgive. And even if. Eventually. We forgave.

We would find it. Very hard. To forget. But this verse. May be emphasizing. The point. That God's. Thoughts. And ways.

[31 : 30] Are not. Our ways. In other words. That God. Will forgive. And will forget. It may be addressing. The issue. In people's minds. Well. Can I really believe.

This. It's so hard. For a human being. To imagine. That somebody. Who's had. Bad treatment. At people's hands. It's. You know.

We might have. Ignored God. For 10 years. 20 years. 30 years. 50 years. We might have. Lived a disillute life. We might have. Had a blasphemous. Mouth. You know. We've had no time.

For God. And then suddenly. We turn to him. And in our human mind. We would say. Well. It's going to take a lot. To make that person. Forgive and forget. That's the way.

Humans think. We don't easily. Forgive and forget. That we've been. Badly treated. But this is saying. God is saying. My thoughts. And my ways. Are not your ways.

[32 : 25] I'm good at forgiving. And I'm good at forgetting. I'm the expert. At forgiving. And forgetting. And I will forgive them.

Precisely because. I'm God. I'm not like you. I'm into the business. Of forgiveness. Full and free. And forever. Forgiveness.

Or it may be. Also. That these words. Are to be connected. With what follows. With God's plans. For the future.

You know. That God's thoughts. And ways. Are far more. Far reaching. Than ours. Because the chapter. Is going on. To say. What God will do.

In the future. And it's saying to us. God's thoughts. And ways. Are way beyond yours. You might be able. To imagine. A little. Of what God.

[33 : 23] Is going to do. But God's mind. Is much bigger. Than yours. He has much. Bigger plans. Than you could ever. Have for yourself. Or for the church.

Or for the world. And he is able. To bring his plans. To fulfillment. Because his thoughts. And ways. Aren't yours. He will.

Achieve. His purposes. Goes on. To say. Later on. In verse 11. It will accomplish. What I purpose. God is able. To see it through. I mean. How many plans.

I've had. That never came. To pass. All kinds. Of. Ambitions. And ideas. And things. I was going to do. And in January.

Once again. I'll be saying. This year. It's going to be different. And I'm going to do this. And that. And the other. Then it. Often falls apart. On the second of January.

[34 : 17] We have all these plans. And they're actually. Small plans. And we don't even. Go through with them. And God is saying. My thoughts and ways.

Aren't your ways. I've got much bigger plans. Than you could ever have. And I will see. All of these plans. Come. To fulfillment.

Everything. Everything that Jesus. Died. To procure. Will. Happen. And all my promises. Will be fulfilled.

All my plans. Will see me. Looking at them. And saying. I did it. I did it. All. Because my ways.

Are not your ways. My thoughts. Are your. Not your thoughts. I've got big plans. And they'll all be fulfilled. An amazing mind.

[35:12] Finally. A word or two. An amazing hope. In verses 10 to 13. An amazing hope. You can see. In verses 10 and 11.

That God stresses. The power of his own word. As the rain and the snow. Come down from heaven. And transform the earth.

Bringing. Fruitfulness. So God says. So is my word. It comes from above. Doesn't it? It comes from God's mouth. And the power for that word.

Comes from above. And God says. My word. Can and will accomplish. From above.

What I want it. To accomplish. And then he goes on. In verses 12 and 13. To give a picture. Of.

[36:07] What this word. Can do. In a kind of new. Creation. As people are released. From captivity. As they go out.

From bondage. As the world. Around them. Seems to change. As creation. Is filled with joy. As the hills. Are alive.

With the sound of music. It's a kind of singing. Planet. In verse 13. Thorn. Bush. And briars. Disappear. They're.

Signs of the fall. Way back. In Genesis. And in. Chapter 7. Of Isaiah. Thorns. And briars. Are signs. Of the judgment. Of God.

On his own. Church. But God. Is saying here. I can change. All of that. And I can change. A situation. From a spiritual. Wilderness.

[37:00] To the garden. Of Eden. Now I think. This can be understood. At two levels. One. Is the obvious one.

Of the world. To come. The new heavens. And the new earth. God is saying. Through my word. And through all. That I will say. And do. Through my word.

One day. This. Universe. That I made. With a word. Will be. Completely. Transformed. And there will be. New heavens.

And a new earth. And it will all be. For the. Penultimate line. The renown. Of the Lord. It will make a name. For the Lord. And there will be. An everlasting sign.

That will not be cut off. That. New world. With new people. With Christ. At its center. Will. Be. For the. Renown. For the glory.

[37:59] Of God. So I think. It's looking. To what God. Will one day do. In the new heavens. In the new earth. But I think. There's another level. At which we can understand. It as well. And it is.

That God. In the here and now. Can. By his word. Turn. A spiritual. Wilderness. Into.

A garden. That God. Can do that. In an individual life. He can change us. That God. Can do it. In a home. God. Can do it. In a congregation.

In a community. In an island. God. By his word. Is able. To turn. What. People. I hear. Around me. Saying.

Is turning. Into a spiritual. Desert. Around them. Compared. With what it used to be. But God. By his word. Very. Very. Quickly. Can speak.

[38:57] New life. Into being. And can speak. Joy. Into people's lives. And it's as if. Everything around. Begins to. Bear fruit. And things.

Begin to sing. And the situation. Changes. It's a picture. Physical picture. Yes. But not just. Of a physical world.

To come. But it's a picture. In spiritual terms. Of the God. Who can change. Any life. And any situation. Any community. By the power.

Of his word. By his gospel. He can turn. A spiritual. Desert. Into a spiritual. Garden. And we need to pray.

For that. To pray. In our own day. For our own lives. In our own homes. Your own church. Your own town. Your own island. To pray.

[39 : 52] That God. Would do great things. Through his word. Through his gospel. By his power. From above. That he would send. The rain from heaven. To bless his word.

That he would transform. The situation. Around us. And make this community. Sing. To his praise. And make it.

A beautiful place. Spiritually. All around us. God can do that. And we are to pray. That God. Would do it. But as I finish.

Remember. It begins with me. According to this. Chapter of scripture. It begins with me. Hearing the voice of God.

Calling me to come. And calling me to trust. And calling me to repent. Calling me to put my trust. In Jesus. This greater David. This Messiah.

[40 : 49] This great covenant king. To put my trust in him. Let it begin with me. May that be true of every one of us. And then radiate out from me.

As I trust Jesus. As I live for Jesus. And as I pray for God's blessing. That every one of us would say. It begins with me. I will trust Jesus.

Jesus. And I will pray to this Jesus. That he will bless me. And this whole island. Because he can do it. He's done that kind of thing before.

He can do it again. And I will trust my Jesus. My savior. My servant. My king. To do what only he can do. And may he do amazing things.

In us. And through us. And around us. To his glory. Amen. Well let's conclude. As we sing in Psalm.

[41 : 46] A hundred and seven. In sing psalms. From verse four. So we're on page. A hundred and forty four. Psalm a hundred and seven.

Sing psalms. At verse four. Some wandered in the desert wastes. Not finding any way.

To verse nine. For hungry souls. He fills with good. The thirsty. He relieves. We stand to sing four to nine. The thirsty.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Some wandered in the desert. Waste not finding any way.

To reach a city where they might. Hopped in a place to stay.

[42 : 46] Their life unspent. Where they may pass. In verse and emptiness. And in despair they sought the Lord.

Who saved them from distress. They walked the path. He led them on.

A city to attain. So for the Lord's unfailing love.

Let them give thanks again. And for the awesome deeds of power.

Wretched sheep or never sheeds. For hungry souls. He fills with good.

[43 : 46] The thirsty. He relieves. We ask Lord that grace, mercy and peace. From Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Be ours tonight and always. Amen.