

Seek The Lord

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[0 : 0 0] Amen. Please take your Bibles and open them up once again to Isaiah chapter 55.

Isaiah chapter 55. If you're using the pew Bibles there in front of you and the seat underneath the seat in front of you, you can find that passage on page 576. And this is now week three that we have been in this incredible chapter of the Old Testament.

It's this invitation in Isaiah's prophecy to come and to feast on the goodness of God. We're going to be in verses 6 and 7 of Isaiah 55 this morning.

So Isaiah 55 verses 6 and 7. So please Bibles open. Look there with me as I read. 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.

[1 : 1 0] And to our God for he will abundantly pardon. Let's pray together once more. Lord, we pray now as we have opened up your word and read your word and now as I stand to preach your word, we pray, Father, for ears to hear that our hearts would be fertile soil for the truth of the gospel this morning.

Would you speak through me? I pray this in Christ's name. Amen. Well, it's hard to believe that we are already past the midway point of November.

And as Charlie Brown says in his Thanksgiving special, we have another holiday to worry about. Thanksgiving Day is upon us. And I'll be honest, I haven't really given it as much thought as I used to.

When I was in college, I would look forward to coming home for Thanksgiving. I think that I was probably hungrier back then. I know that I had no money.

I was poorer then. I had nothing to bring. Didn't even know how to cook. So nobody expected me to do anything whatsoever, which was good for me. Because all I had to do was come home and eat.

[2 : 2 3] And I could do that. For a couple of days, I could come home and feast on home-cooked food. There's turkey and dressing, macaroni and cheese, hams and yams, beans and greens, cakes and pies, bread and rolls.

And if I timed it just right, I could eat our own lunch, our own Thanksgiving dinner, and then make it to my friend's house for dinner as well. Sometimes they would time it differently. We'd have ours for lunch.

They'd have theirs for dinner. Maybe we'd have ours on Thursday. They'd have theirs on Friday. So there's just enough margin where maybe I could feast twice if I was lucky. So you didn't have to invite me twice to come over and feast for Thanksgiving.

I was ready to come and eat. You see, most people don't approach Thanksgiving dinner reluctantly, do they? And most people don't come dragging their feet to the table.

They don't come to the table half-heartedly dragging their feet. Most people don't come wondering whether there's going to be enough food there to satisfy them. They don't come wondering and asking, will I find something good to eat?

[3 : 32] Now, see, I know I just made a huge mistake, didn't I? Huge mistake. Preachers aren't supposed to talk about food this early in the sermon, and we're all getting hungry now. But there's no getting around it, church, because Isaiah 55 has been inviting us to come and to feast.

We've seen, haven't we, over the past three weeks, he's been inviting us, calling out to any who would listen, not just hear, but listen diligently, to come and to feast.

And we've seen, haven't we, over the past few weeks, that although it's described in these terms of physical food, and water, and milk, and bread, and wine, that the feast ultimately is God himself.

We're invited, broken, sinful, poor, and needy, to come and to satisfy our souls on the goodness of God.

To listen diligently to his word, and to hear, it says, that your soul may live. Isaiah has been telling us over and over and over again, this is the big idea of Isaiah 55, there is nothing more satisfying for your soul than God.

[4 : 52] And he invites you to come and to feast. He invites you and offers himself fully to you this morning, if you would just come and feast.

So the question that I want to ask this morning, and let these verses, verses 6 and 7 answer for us this morning, is simply this. How should we respond to an invitation like that?

How should we respond to an invitation like that? Well, I'll tell you, we should respond like a poor, hungry college student coming home for Thanksgiving.

See, this is what our passage this morning shows us in verses 6 and 7. It tells us exactly how we should respond to this invitation to come and feast.

And Isaiah says we should respond in three ways. Three ways. This will be our outline this morning if you're taking notes. Three ways we should respond to this invitation.

[5 : 52] Three ways we should respond to this invitation. We should come urgently. We should come totally.

And we should come confidently. As our outline this morning, if you're writing it down, three ways we should respond to this invitation.

Come urgently. Come totally. Come confidently. First, Isaiah says we should come urgently. In other words, do not drag your feet coming to this feast.

Come with urgency. You know, there's a reason why from November 24th to November 28th last year, do you know how many tickets state police issued?

10,126 speeding tickets were issued between November 24th and November 28th last year. Why? Because they knew people from all over the country would be booking it down the road to get home and feast with urgency.

[6 : 58] Well, Isaiah is telling us that's how we should respond to this invitation. We should respond with urgency. Why? Well, two main reasons. Because the feast is good and the time is short.

The feast is good and the time is short. Look there to verse 6 again. Isaiah 55, verse 6. Isaiah, he gives this command for sinners to come, to seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.

And so the first thing that I think we should notice about this invitation is this incredibly profound truth that the Lord may be sought. The Lord may be found.

This is incredible. The God of heaven and earth is near. He may be called upon. He can hear. He wants to show us here that the feast is good.

You remember what Isaiah told us in verse 1, this invitation to come everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. He who has no money, come buy and eat.

[8 : 06] Come buy wine and milk without money, without price. You see, this incredible feast is available to any who would simply come. The gospel is the good news that God has offered himself through Christ to any who would come to him.

Anyone. This invitation is extended out broadly to the weakest, the poorest, the lowless, the weak, the lonely, those who are spiritually broke and hungry.

Any who would come and listen and trust can have their souls satisfied forever. And they can feast on the goodness of God. Through the gospel, the only one who is able to truly satisfy your soul says, come on.

Come to me. Come. The table is set. Dinner is ready. Come and feast. Stop spending your money on not bread and come feast your souls on me.

Well, how do we seek him? How do we seek the Lord? We're invited to seek the Lord. How do we do that? Isaiah says that our seeking is expressed in calling.

[9 : 24] Our seeking is expressed in calling. When I don't see one of my boys, I have three boys. When I maybe have two of them with me and one of them slipped out of my sight, what do I do?

I call out to them. Where are you? Come here. I need you. I call them by name. I speak until I'm heard. That's how I seek my child. And if they're near enough, and if they're paying any attention, he will listen and respond.

In the same way, Isaiah is telling us that we seek God primarily by calling out to him in prayer.

Not just with our words, but with our hearts seeking the Lord. Isn't this what Jeremiah told the exiled Israelites as well? He said, you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Church, this is incredible news for sinners. It's just astounding. Have we gotten over this fact that the God of all creation, this God that no one has ever seen, no one can ever see, is near.

[10 : 37] He is near. He is near enough to hear. He's near enough to respond to the cries of sinners. And he may be found by those who call out and seek him.

But the bad news, the second reason we should respond with urgency here, is that this offer has an expiration. This is an invitation to come limited time only.

Some of you, I know, love Thanksgiving for the food, but I also know some of you probably like it for the Black Friday sales, right? And I can't wrap my mind around it because Black Friday seems like it gets longer every year.

November 1st, I started receiving emails saying Black Friday deals had begun. That window keeps expanding, getting longer and longer. But even still, once December 1st comes, that deal is off the table.

It's gone. No longer available. That sale is gone until next year, at least. But see, they want you to feel that sense of urgency in your heart so that you will come and you will spend your money while the deal is available.

[11 : 52] They want you to know it is limited time only. Well, did you know, in the same way, in the same way, Isaiah is telling us we should respond with urgency to this invitation of God because God has opened up this window, he has extended this offer, and he has the freedom to shut it anytime he wants.

It is a limited time offer. One day, you don't know when, I don't know when, either you will die or Christ will return.

Until one of those things happen, friend, we have a window is open. This invitation is extended. But friend, the window in which we can call out to him, in which sinners can seek the Lord when he is near enough to hear, when he's lending his ear in mercy towards sinners, that window is shutting, and we don't know when.

Look again to verse 6. What does he say? He says, You see, God has extended an invitation to you and to the whole world to come, to listen, to come, to trust my son, to come, have your sins forgiven, come, have your souls satisfied, but it is limited time only.

God has extended an invitation, but the day has come when that invitation will no longer be available. The doors to the wedding feast will be closed, every seat will be filled, and you will no longer be able to enter.

[13 : 43] The day will come, we don't know when, when the Lord will not be found by sinners, when he will not be near enough to call upon. There is an expiration date on this offer, so we must respond to it with urgency.

And we don't know how long we have. You know, we live in an incredibly unique period of history. Have you ever thought about this? There was eternity past before creation, before any of us were here.

There's eternity future, when all the redeemed will be with the Lord, and all the wicked will be separated from his presence. We live in this unique period of history of God's mercy to sinners.

You ever wonder how God can endure such evil in the world? Men and women created in his image, every one of them created to glorify him, created to honor him, delight in them, who spit in his face every day.

You know that was us. Every one of us, apart from the grace of God, apart from the mercy and the patience of God.

[14 : 53] We were his enemies, but he showed us mercy. I'm grateful for the patience of the Lord. He showed us mercy, not because of works done by us, but according to his own mercy.

I'm thankful for the patience of God with a sinner like me, but friend, that mercy and that patience towards sinners, it has an expiration date. It will not last forever.

Do not presume, as Paul says in Romans, on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance, but because of your hard and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself, on the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

If you are not in Christ, if you have never trusted Christ, friend, run. Don't walk.

Run to the table with urgency while he may be found. And friend, if we are in Christ, church, we must share him with urgency.

[16 : 11] We must share him with urgency. As our lost friends and family members and coworkers and neighbors and connections perish without the hope of the gospel, we must share him with urgency.

We must share him urgently while he may be found. Not just this second. Isaiah says the second way we should respond to this invitation of God is to come totally.

To come totally. Look there to verse 7 with me. Isaiah says, Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

Let him return to the Lord. See, this is a call for total repentance. Total repentance. That's an unpopular word, isn't it? It means stop sinning.

Which means you're a sinner. Which means I'm a sinner. And in order to feast on the goodness of God, Isaiah says we need to repent of our sin.

[17 : 14] We need to stop feasting on sin. In order to turn to the Lord, we must turn from our sin. That is repentance. It is to abandon it.

Isaiah says forsake it. To leave it behind. And to turn to the Lord. Isaiah is telling us we can't feast on him while we fill ourselves with the not-breads of our idols.

That's what verse 2 told us. You remember last week. Why do you spend your money on that which is not bread? Why do you labor for that which does not satisfy? He says listen diligently to me and eat with your soul.

Eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food. This is what we're all prone to do. C.S. Lewis, he says human history is the long, terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.

See, our sin, our idols, they promise satisfaction but they never deliver. They promise to satisfy but they always fall short.

[18 : 23] They cannot satisfy the hunger of our souls. Only God can do that. And so this call to forsake our wicked ways, to forsake our wicked thoughts, that's a call to stop snacking on sin and to come feast on the Lord.

God demands total allegiance. What does he say? Love the Lord your God with what? All your heart. All your mind.

All your soul. All your strength. Isn't this what Jesus told his disciples? He said if anyone would come, does that sound familiar? If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever would save his life would lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. John Piper, he gives this illustration of a married man in an affair.

He says it like this. He says, you cannot seek God where he is not found in sin. It would be like a man who leaves his wife, moves into his own apartment, has a regular sexual affair alongside his marriage, and then gets on the phone and calls and seeks his wife.

[19 : 43] And she says, have you forsaken this woman? And he says, no, I can't. And then she will rightly say, then you are not seeking me.

Your call is empty. You will seek me and find me as your wife when you forsake her and all others for me alone, just like you vowed.

We must repent totally. What does that look like? Look there to verse 7 again. Isaiah expresses this total repentance by calling the wicked to forsake in two ways here.

We must forsake our sinful ways and forsake our sinful thoughts. You see that there in verse 7. We must forsake our sinful ways.

That's our actions. What we do. This is the external, the visible. What others can see and witness and say, man, yeah, that was wrong. You really lost your temper in there, Jonathan.

[20 : 46] You really shouldn't have said that, should you? That was bad. That was wrong. That was sinful. I saw that. That was dishonest. But Isaiah says, don't stop there because our visible sin, what others can see with their two eyes, is almost always the fruit of invisible sin.

It's almost always deeper than we think. It's internal. It's always more. See, murder flows downstream from anger. Flows downstream from hatred.

Adultery flows downstream from lust, from dissatisfaction. Thievery flows downstream from greed. And yes, these are all heart issues.

They're issues of the heart, but they're also deeply connected with the mind. Which is why Isaiah tells us we must also forsake our wicked thoughts.

Your thoughts are incredibly powerful. Do you realize how powerful your thoughts are? They are the director of your actions.

[21 : 55] They're the steering wheel that influences the course, your path. This wicked way that you're on is likely directed and steered by wicked thoughts. If your thoughts are worldly, if your thoughts are wicked, if your thoughts are conformed to the patterns of this world, rather than transformed by the renewal of your mind, it may not be today, it may not be tomorrow, but friend, it will work itself out in your actions.

It will work itself out visibly. Listen, I don't know what you're thinking most of the time. Sometimes I can see it on your face. Sometimes I can guess.

Make an educated guess. But most of the time, your thoughts, they belong to you. Right? They're hidden. They're internal. They're private.

But not to God. In the sight of God, your inner self, our hidden self, the thoughts and the motives and the desires and the urges that we try to keep hidden from everybody else around us is as visible to God as any external action we take.

And if that's true, it's not enough simply to change your behavior. Right? It's not enough simply to forsake our wicked actions.

[23 : 14] That might fool me. That might fool other people. That might impress one another. But God is not fooled. You must repent totally, inside and out, actions and thoughts.

The church, what sinful actions from the past week need to be repented of? By name, need to be repented of? The past month, the past year, the past hour.

And if you haven't acted outwardly in a sinful way, though I'm sure you have, what sinful thoughts need to be repented of? Thoughts that no one else knows about?

Thoughts of anger or lust or pride? What thoughts need to be forsaken that we might come to the Lord? Totally. Totally. Have you come to Him?

Totally. Because here's the thing, church. We can either forsake our sin and turn to God, or we forsake our God and turn to sin. There is no middle ground.

[24 : 19] There's no middle ground. We either forsake our sin and turn to God, or we are forsaking our God to turn to sin. We cannot have it both ways.

Have you come to Him totally? But you may wonder, what will happen when I do? What will happen when I do?

Isn't the presence of God the last place a sinner needs to go? Isn't the presence of God a bad thing for sinners? Why would I go there with my sin?

Shouldn't I clean myself up and then get to God? Won't God turn me away or punish me or make me feel guilty for my sin? Friend, if that's how you're feeling this morning, I have good news for you.

Third, we can come to Him confidently. We can come to Him confidently. Look there again to verse 7. These are some of the most assuring words for sinners like you and like me.

[25 : 23] What we will find when we come to the Lord as broken and sinful as we are, when we leave the comfort of our sin and forsake the false security of our sin and call upon the name of the Lord, what will we find?

Verse 7. 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. Church, we can come to the Lord confidently because His heart is full of compassion towards sinners.

He is eager to pardon. Not just to pardon, but it says to pardon abundantly. Let me ask you a question.

This is what I spent most of my time wrestling with this week as I studied this passage. What is the difference between pardon and abundant pardon?

[26 : 32] Think about that. What is the difference between pardon and abundant pardon? And what is pardon? Pardon is forgiveness. It's a declaration. You're treated like you're no longer guilty.

You're treated like you're innocent. You are forgiven. A criminal who knows that he's guilty, who stands before the judge, he should rejoice to hear the truth that he has been pardoned, not guilty.

What difference does it make for that criminal if he's pardoned or if he's abundantly pardoned? Four differences and then we're done.

I had two, but then I came up with two more while I was whacking Miss Martha's bushes yesterday, doing some yard work. So we got four differences. Then we're done. First one is obvious.

This didn't take me long. Abundant pardon is abundant and pardon is not. What's the difference between pardon and abundant pardon? Well, abundant pardon is more.

[27 : 33] It is abundant. What happens the next day when that guilty criminal goes out and he breaks the law again? And then again the next day?

And then again the next day? And then again the next day? And the next day? And the next day? And every day for the rest of his life for such a wicked person, for a repeat offender, pardon is not enough unless it is abundant pardon.

Friend, we are guilty. Not just one time. We are guilty of breaking the law of God every single day.

But the gospel tells us that God the judge has decreed abundant pardon for any who would come and turn from their sin and trust in the name of the Lord.

Overflowing pardon. Infinite pardon for every broken law. Every single sin. Past, present, future. for any guilty sinner who would simply come and receive what he is offering.

[28 : 43] That is life changing grace is it not? That is real freedom. That means your sins cannot rule you anymore. That means your guilt cannot crush you anymore.

If you have come to Christ for forgiveness you will have it and you will have it abundantly as far as the east is from the west. What does he say? So far have I removed your sins from you.

So what's the difference between pardon and abundant pardon? It's infinite. It's limitless. It's abundant. It's totally effective for all time.

Friend, our sin and our guilt cannot outmeasure his grace. When we come to the Lord it is swept away in a flood of compassion and pardon.

It's the difference between a sip of medicine and life-saving immunity from every sickness. Second, there's another difference. Infinite everlasting pardon like this it cannot be earned by sinners.

[29 : 52] Infinite pardon cannot be earned by sinners. It must be received. We cannot earn this grace. You know if you were just a little bit guilty just a little bit guilty maybe a merciful judge would let you get out on good behavior right?

But again we are abundantly sinful so we stand in need of total abundant pardon. We need total forgiveness that we cannot earn but again the gospel tells us that Christ has.

Jesus Christ was the only one who has ever totally obeyed the law of God. He's the only one who is totally sinless.

He alone earned eternal life. He earned it by his perfect obedience and yet he lived in our place. He died in our place in the place of sinners so that any who trust in him can be abundantly pardoned not on the basis of our goodness on the basis of what we have earned but on the basis of his goodness.

The gospel tells us that he was treated as we deserved so that any who come to him might be treated as he deserved. That's the gospel. Third which is why salvation like this pardon like this that ought to overflow in praise for God.

[31 : 29] Amen? Abundant pardon leads to abundant praise. What did Jesus tell his disciples?

He who is forgiven little loves little. There's a connection here. There ought to be. That's the aim of God in the gospel. There's a connection between how much we are loved and forgiven and pardoned and how much praise and love and glory go back out toward God.

If you're starving and someone gives you a crumb to eat, you might say, thanks. Gee, thanks. I appreciate it. But if you're starving and a feast is laid before you, plates upon plates upon plates, you're invited to come and eat at no cost to yourself, your heart ought to rejoice.

It ought to overflow with thanksgiving and praise and worship as we're satisfied in what he's providing. He is receiving the glory. That's the aim of abundant pardon.

The greater the pardon, the greater the worship. Friend, we have been abundantly pardoned. And fourth, abundant pardon.

[32 : 51] shows us God's eagerness to save. Abundant pardon shows us God's eagerness to save.

Pardon can come from reluctance. Pardon, simple pardon, that can come from uncertainty. The judge may roll his eyes, be on the fence, just let you go this one time, but really not care too much.

But friend, abundant pardon, that's the overflow of a heart that is eager to save. You can forgive someone, sure, just move on, be done with it, but to abundantly forgive, it requires that your heart be bent, not just towards justice, but towards love for the one who did you wrong.

wrong. We need to see that God is not just willing to save sinners, he is eager to save sinners. When sinners forsake their wicked way and come to God, they don't find anger, they don't find chastisement, God does not roll his eyes and reluctantly forgive, that's what I would do.

If somebody messed up and wronged me as many times as I've wronged God, that is exactly what I would do. But as we'll see next week, his ways are not our ways, his thoughts are not our thoughts, he is overflowing with love and compassion and mercy towards sinners.

[34 : 32] When sinners come to God, they find compassion and pardon in abundance, they find a feast of forgiveness. Too often, I think, we take just such a low view of God's heart, a low view of God's grace, of his eagerness to save.

We come to the Lord guilty with our tail tucked between our legs, and we just imagine him rolling his eyes, you again, really? That is not the heart of God.

Those who run from God in their sin will be punished, but those who run from their sin to God will be pardoned.

Why? Because that is exactly why Christ came. That is exactly why Christ came.

Thomas Goodwin, the old Puritan, he says that Christ's own joy, I want you to listen to this.

[35 : 41] Christ's own joy, comfort, happiness, and glory are increased and enlarged by his showing grace and mercy in pardoning, relieving, and comforting his members here on earth.

Did you hear that? Christ's own joy is tied to our finding pardon through his atoning work.

Did you catch that? Christ's joy is bound up with ours. Why? Because that is precisely what he came to do. Nothing would please him more than for us to come and to make use of his sacrifice, to come and to find forgiveness in him.

That's why he came. It honors him. It pleases him. It magnifies his glory for sinners to find refuge in him. That's why he shed his blood. That's why he came.

He came to demonstrate the heart of God towards sinners. He has prepared a feast and it pleases him. It honors him when we come and eat again and again and again and say, can I have more?

[36 : 55] Can I have more? Can I have another helping please? Can I have more? And he says, come, bring me your plate. Nothing would make me happier than to shower abundant pardon on you.

Church, God is far more eager to show us mercy than we are to seek it. But we can come to the Lord with confidence because God loves to save sinners.

sinners. He loves to forgive sinners. Should we ever question how eager God is to save us, to forgive us, to redeem us totally, to receive us, look constantly to the cross of Christ.

Our God the Son died in your place. And remember that because he rose from the grave never to die again, Hebrews tells us that he is always able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him since he always lives to make intercession for them.

So again in Hebrews says, let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

[38 : 23] if you would know life and joy and peace and satisfaction would you come to Christ?

Would you seek him with all of your heart? Would you call upon the name of the Lord and know that without hesitation you will be saved?

a few weeks ago we concluded with the parable of the prodigal son and it seems fitting again doesn't it to end our time there this morning this sinful son who exchanged his father for what his father could give him he traded the comfort and the joy of knowing his father for the riches and the gifts his father could give he got his inheritance and he went on his way and he spent every last dime to the point where he was so hungry that he just begged to eat whatever the pigs were eating do you remember how the father responded when the son returned home not a word of guilt not a word of anger not a word of chastisement what happened the father ran to him and rejoiced that his son was lost but is now found he was dead but is now alive and he celebrated with a feast so it will be with any sinner who forsakes his wicked way and turns to the

Lord for forgiveness so I close with this encouragement church as you gather this week with family and friends around the table and fill yourself to the brim with food and drink let it be a pointer to you of this feast in Isaiah chapter 55 let it be a reminder to you to come to the Lord urgently and totally and confidently and to feast your soul on the goodness of God let's pray Lord there is nothing more satisfying than you our souls were made to delight in you and though we have left you and been faithless father you have been faithful and you have sent your son so that any sinner who calls upon the name of Christ will be received and pardoned in abundance

Lord we thank you for the good news of the gospel and we ask father that you would stir our hearts this week remind us of your goodness would you draw our souls to you we love you we pray this in Jesus name amen