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GOD BECKONS: COME... 3." And Be Satisfied"

Isaiah 55:1-13 Luke 6:43-49

"Are you thirsty?" All living things need water.

"Are you hungry?" Likewise, all living things need food, nourishment.

God made us, so God knows we have need of water and food.

"Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!"

More than just talk about water and bread, "thirst" and "hunger" refer to fulfillment of human needs.

This text is about God's ultimate fulfillment of all human needs: mind, body, soul, spirit.

"Are you thirsty? Are you hungry?" God asks. "Come! Come!"

THE INVITATION

Isaiah 55 realizes that we all have needs and yet all-too-often our attempts to satisfy our needs are in vain. Only God can truly satisfy our needs, so God invites us, lures us, beckons us to the sacred fulfillment of our wants, needs, and desires. "Come to the waters..." "Come!" "Come delight yourselves in rich food..." "Come!" "Incline your ear..." "Come!"

The problem is, we humans confuse our needs with our desires, our wants and wishes.

Materialism and greed, stockpiling resources beyond what we need does not satisfy.

We cram our calendars full of activities, hoping that it will bring us contentment -- but that's like pouring water into a bucket hoping to fill it without first plugging the hole in the bottom. Unless you fill the void in your soul, desperate attempts to fill your life will not work.

A bigger house, more possessions, longer and grander vacations do not satisfy. We always want more, and many people are discovering the joy peace of mind by focusing more on simplicity and community. Henry David Thoreau's long ago declared what many are just now learning. *"Our We is frittered away by detail.... Simplify, simplify."* (Harris)

Benjamin Franklin wrote: *"Money never made a man happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more a man has, the more he wants. Instead of its filling a vacuum, it makes one. If it satisfies one want, it doubles and trebles that want another way."*

We stuff our lives full yet we remain empty.

A young mother in my prior pastorate once confided that she was miserable even though others envied her lifestyle. She and her husband were wealthy, they had a big house and both drove new cars every year. She bought her clothes at a retail boutique and never looked at a price tag. They could afford whatever they wanted, so she just bought it. They took fancy vacations, had a maid to clean their house, and they lived the life of luxury.... And she was miserable.

She would buy armloads of new clothes, take them home, hang them in her closet and never wear them. They still hung in her closet with the price tags on them. One day at the church she opened her car trunk and it was full of beautiful clothes and knick-knacks still in their packages weeks later after she bought them. Once she got it all home it brought her no pleasure, so it just floated around in her trunk. They took exotic vacations with the "in-crowd" of young socialites in that town, and yet she was sick and tired of their shallow friendships and surface conversations. She was rich in things, but poor in spirit. In her words, they were marginal Christians; God played a minor role in their life.

It was only after she and her husband attended Cursillo spiritual renewal weekends in Memphis and they both accepted Christ into their hearts again, that they found the road to fulfillment. By turning to God, this couple found new life; they reassessed their priorities in life, and got a new sense of purpose in their lives, Money became their servant, not their master. They became leaders in that congregation. Their relationship with God became the focus of their life, their marriage, and their family. They began family devotions and brought the Bible into their everyday life. They were still financially wealthy, but now they became rich in spirit too, and they found peace in their souls,

"Why do you spend money for what is not bread?" God asks, "and your wages for what does not satisfy?" (Isaiah 55:1)

THE COVENANT

God extends the invitation to all who hunger and thirst. Water, bread, wine, and rich food are symbolic of the gifts given to seal a covenant, symbolic of the benefits - both material and spiritual - of God's covenant with humanity. The operative word is "come." We must accept God's invitation, we must respond to God's offer.

Verse 3-5 review God's covenant with David which is ratified once again in God's offer to us. *"Remember] my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples."* King David, gifted musician, warrior, leader, and king, not only had basic human needs, he clearly also had insatiable desires (do you recall Bathsheba bathing in the courtyard and David's adultery?) But even lustful King David ultimately found fulfillment by returning to God alone and God restored to David the joy of his salvation.

This new found satisfaction is so compelling others will want to join us in receiving it. Recall Isaiah 55:5, *"See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel. "* Folk all around you have needs and desires too, and perhaps as they hear you witness what God has done in your life, how God has met your needs, they too come to know that there is something more, someone larger than themselves, some higher calling that will fulfill them, and they will come to know God! The God who alone can satisfy their needs in life.

REPENT

Isaiah reiterates what we already know - that to receive the new kingdom, to receive the blessings, the water that quenches our thirst and the bread that satisfies our souls, we must turn away from our selfish desires and sinful ways, repent of our errors, ask God's forgiveness, and accept God's mercy.

Isaiah, chapter 55, has two climaxes:

- First, hungry people need satisfaction, and verses 1-5 show the way from poverty to abundance.
- Secondly, wicked people need salvation, and verses 6-13 show the way from sin through pardon to glory.

Beginning at verse 6, Isaiah beckons us, *"Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."* The water, the wine, the milk, the bread, the substance and the "abundance" God offers are a divine feast where everyone will be satisfied. These are an invitation to draw from the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). God guarantees his "steadfast love" and guidance. If you will respond, God's goodness and truth cannot fail to bless you.

As surely as the rain and snow water the earth and make things grow, so God's Word cannot help but grow in you and produce new life. God's purpose cannot be thwarted by evil or doubt or despair. *"So my word which goes forth from my mouth... shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it forth; for you will go out with joy and be led forth with peace" (11-12).*

Do you hear the rhythm in these verses?

- Come...go, come...go.
- Having come to God distressed . . .we shall now go out with joy
- Coming to God because we're hungry and thirsty...we shall be go forth in peace.
- We came to God hungry and thirsty for peace, for love, for meaning.
- We go forth satisfied; full, fat, sassy, with love in our hearts and a song on our lips.

RAIN, WORD, REIGN

The last few verses of Isaiah 55 reveal God on the move, God's "WORD" will not be denied. As surely as rain falls from the sky and brings growth, so God will accomplish his plan, satisfy our needs, and God's WORD shall reign forever. While Isaiah addressed the immediate needs of God's people in exile in Babylonia, we Christians know the fulfillment of God's prophecy in Jesus Christ the WORD of God who reigns forever.

Isaiah 55 proclaims that instead of thorns and briars ruling the wilderness, now cypress and myrtle trees will come up and claim the wilderness, ever-lasting signs and reminders of the transforming grace in God's New Kingdom.

Compare that to our reading in Luke's gospel, chapter 6: "thorns and thistles" do not produce "figs and grapes." Fig trees and grapevines do. Good fruits come from clean living. What is in your heart will produce itself in your life. Those who hear and obey God's word are like those who build their houses on the solid rock, and those who do not hear or obey are like those who build mud huts in the creek bed. With Jesus Christ in your heart, you can withstand anything.

Even though our needs are great, we can rely on the effectiveness of God's word: God brings results: *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it."*

- "Are you thirsty?" Come, drink to your hearts content at the well that will never run dry.
- "Are you hungry?" Come, eat the rich food of the Bread of Life that sustains all life.
- You who are without money - that's okay, you don't have to earn this food. It's not cheap, nor is it without cost, but it is free, because God has already picked up the tab. God has paid the price with the life of his son, Jesus Christ, crucified, dead and buried. Then risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, to reign forever ever.

You may have to work a little for your gratification - a little repentance, a little humility, a little trust, a little discipline, a little celebration - but be assured, God wants to bless you and fill you up with good things!

We are all invited to the feast. Come to Jesus and experience the satisfaction of abundant life. In the words of John 4:14, *"Whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst. The water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life!"* Say "Yes" to Jesus and God will give you the gift of salvation that no one can ever take away from you. Jesus will fill the hole in your soul

You will not have to pretend that you have the good life! You will have the full and abundant life, rich in purpose, full in hope, sustained by the grace of God.

Come, buy and eat. Come; be satisfied in God's abundance! Amen!

Sources

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