

Sunday Sermon August 20, 2017

Sermon Text: Isaiah 55:1-5

Sermon Theme: Come to the Table

1. All are Welcome 2. The Food is Free and Lasts Forever

¹ *Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.*

² *Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.*

³ *Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.*

I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

⁴ *See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples.*

⁵ *Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor.”*

I remember going to my family get-togethers at Easter and Thanksgiving when I was younger. My family would have to pack into the car after church and drive to the relative’s house.

When we got there, we would take out whatever item that we had brought for supper and place it alongside all the other things that had been brought by the other uncles and aunts.

We would have some play time with the cousins, but soon, our stomachs would be growling and we would be wondering when it would be time to eat.

You know what happened next.... the adults would be seated at one main table in the dining room and the children would have the secondary table in another room.

I never liked sitting at the children’s table, but not because it was an insult. I never liked sitting there because I had to wait so long for the food to get to me. By the time, I got the food, it was cold or picked over. Then just about the time I got some on my plate, the main table would ask for the dish back and I would have to get up and take it back to them.

Sitting at the main table was something special. We all wanted to sit at that table. I never cracked that main table because I was always one of the younger cousins. While the main table grew longer to accommodate the older cousins, I was still at the small card table someplace else. Sitting at the main table was something special, it was reserved for special people like the adults.

This morning we hear the LORD speaking through his prophet Isaiah. Our LORD offers us a place at his special table. He is talking about more than just a table prepared for Easter or Thanksgiving. Our LORD is talking about a table where all are welcome. He offers food that is free, and it is food that will last forever.

There are a lot of questions that a host has to answer before they throw a dinner-party. What kind of party are we having? Will it be themed? Will there be social time? What are we expecting people to wear? Will we have an activity along with it? Who will be invited to the party?

Sometimes the more important list for us is not the list of people that we do invite to the party, it’s the list of people that we do not invite. There are people that we just don’t want coming to our house or our party.

Most of us know the heart-ache that comes from not being invited to a party. Maybe in grade school there was a birthday party that everybody else went to, but you were not invited. In high school or college, maybe there were parties where all the cool kids were invited, but you were very rarely asked to go. Maybe you have come into work on Monday and the place is abuzz with all the talk about this or that person’s weekend get-together and you were left off of the invite list.

As we look at the first 5 verses of Isaiah 55 this morning, we see an invitation. But this invitation is much longer than 5 verses. This invitation extends back two chapters. In Isaiah 53, Isaiah tells us why we have reason to celebrate. He shows us our Savior and what he has done for us. Our Savior was led like the lamb to the slaughter, he was pierced, crushed and punished for our sins. We see the reason we have to celebrate comes from our Savior, and the work that he has done to save us from our sins.

Isaiah 54 gives us more reason to celebrate. The Savior’s work has amazing outcomes for his people. We no longer need to be ashamed, our Messiah has removed our guilt and disgrace. Through Jesus, God looks

on us not with anger, but with everlasting kindness. The LORD's protection is on us and we are at peace with him.

Isaiah 55, our sermon text, is the culmination of these two wonderful chapters. The Messiah has done all of this work for us and have given us reason to celebrate. In Isaiah 55 we hear the invitation that God makes, not just to a select few, but to all people. Come, join at my table of blessing and salvation.

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.

This Messiah would be the perfect lamb that would go to the cross to make this invitation possible. The Apostle Peter wrote, **“Christ died once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”** Jesus offered himself as the sacrifice for all people. He would be pierced for the sins of the world, crushed because of your sins and mine, and punished so that he could take the punishment we deserved and satisfy his heavenly Father.

We don't have to worry that God is just being polite when he makes his invitation. We don't have to worry that in the end he will stop us at the door and not let us in. God really wants repentant sinners like us to be with him. He wants us to join with him at his blessed banquet. Paul writes, **“God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”**

God extends this invitation to all people in the world regardless of color, nation, or creed. But his invitation, his Word, is not alone. As it goes out, God the Holy Spirit is there, working wherever that Word is preached. It is the Holy Spirit who calls sinners, like you and me, to repent of our sins so that we can approach the LORD in peace. It is the Holy Spirit who creates and strengthens faith in Jesus. By his power we are able to trust in Jesus alone for our salvation and forgiveness. It is the Holy Spirit who brings us to God's table and gives us our place at that table as his own dear children.

It is the Holy Spirit who makes it possible for us to sit at God's table and listen to his invitation, but we are sinful and we can certainly reject that invitation. And, as sinners, we do reject it. Sometimes we reject it in big ways and sometimes we refuse to listen in smaller ways.

Even though we call ourselves believers in God, we make idols for ourselves and then we worship these idols. We may choose, a false god or a false teaching, but our idols are not only those things. We make idols out of everyday things as well. We begin to place importance on money, time, ourselves, our families, or our career. We don't even realize they are idols until we see that we are using more money, more time, or more effort on these things than on God. We are worshiping them by giving them the same things that we should be giving to God.

We call ourselves Christians. But, our decisions do not show a heart that wants to thank and praise our Savior, our decisions reveal a heart that often rejects God in favor of our thoughts, our own selfishness, our own pleasure or comfort. Our sinful choices often lead us away from Lord's house, his table, and the Word that we so desperately need.

God gave us the third commandment to remind us how important setting aside times for worship and devotion in his Word actually are. In this commandment, we hear his call made to his people. Come to my table, come to my house, and hear the saving message that will build you up to eternity.

It is God who calls out to us with his invitation and it is God who sets the table with his eternal food which is free and lasts forever. Listen once again to the prophet:

¹ **Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.**

² **Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?**

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

³ **Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.**

It would be very strange if we would only have to go to the supermarket once in our life because the food was so good that we would be satisfied forever. We know that that wouldn't happen because food doesn't satisfy us forever. We eat a meal, then we come back to eat again because we are hungry again. We have to keep going to the supermarket to get more. We have to keep going back.

But the food that God offers through Jesus is better than any earthly food. This food will satisfy us because it is not earthly food, it is spiritual food. God's food, his Gospel, fills us up with the good news of the forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus gives to us. This message never changes, it will not spoil or go bad

It would also be strange if we had a full cart of groceries and the check-out person told us that the whole thing was free. We know that wouldn't happen either. The food God is free. Jesus won these gifts on the cross not for himself. He won them so that he could give them to us freely and fully.

Jesus could have chosen any way he wanted in order to give us these special blessings. He could have come up with some tests in order to make sure that we were actually worthy of them. He could have had us do some sort of physical challenge like climb the highest mountain, swim the ocean, or run a marathon. He could have had us earn these blessings by having us prove our faithfulness by witnessing to 10 people a day, by having us pray at least 3 times a day, by having us do a mission trip or a pilgrimage somewhere, or by simply telling us we need to be in church every week. He could have had us buy these gifts by putting a price on them. Then all we would have to do was come up with some money to pay for God's blessings and we would be set.

But Jesus doesn't place any of these qualifications on his invitation. He offers us spiritual food, the Gospel, which brings to us saving faith which clings to Jesus, the eternal forgiveness of sins, the life of blessing and thanksgiving, and the everlasting life with him are all gifts of his love to us and they are all given freely and fully, now and forever.

Our God offers an invitation: Come to my table of blessing. The food is free and it is eternal. Our loving God makes this invitation to all who live in this world. He sends the Holy Spirit to work faith in our hearts which believes in this Savior, who gives to us the food we need for our souls. This food of the Gospel will fill us up to eternal life. Amen