

"So will My word (the divinely inspired Word of God!) be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it!" (Isaiah 55:11)

"So also will be the word that I speak; it does not return to Me unfulfilled! My word performs My purpose and fulfills the mission I sent it out to accomplish!" (Isaiah 55:11, Passion Version)

Last week's lesson on Isaiah 54 began on a joyful note, and appropriately so, as it follows on the heels of one of the greatest chapters in all of Scripture--Isaiah 53--where Isaiah announces how God would provide "redemption" for "sinners such as us"--by sending His Son to shed His blood on the cross, and become the sacrificial "Lamb of God" (prefigured in the Levitical law) to make "atonement" for our sin, thus providing "the way," and giving us the hope and the promise, of redemption and eternal life!

As we noted, this prophecy of Isaiah was wondrously fulfilled, Galatians 4:4 says, "when in the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons"! The apostle Paul would write in II Corinthians 5:21 that "God would make Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"! And in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man (speaking of Adam), the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the many would be made righteous"! And then there's the all-familiar John 3:16, and many more we could cite to confirm Isaiah's prophecy about God's great plan of redemption!

One of the most beautiful of prophecies are Isaiah's words in Isaiah 54:10-11, where he records Yahweh proclaiming that "even if the mountains were to crumple and the hills disappear (as we learn they well might in the "last days"! ) My heart of steadfast, faithful love will never leave you, and My covenant of peace with you will never be shaken..." and he goes on to describe the dazzling splendor of the "New Jerusalem," which Revelation 21:10 says "will come down out of heaven from God," and which pictures the joy and security that lies ahead for all God's people, and not just for Israel!

Isaiah 54 ends with the great reminder that "this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord," and that "their righteousness is from Me"!

All of which sets the scene (and tone!) for Isaiah 55, where Isaiah makes the crucial point that, after hearing and understanding (in Isaiah 53) all that God has done in providing redemption for us (and all the benefits of it, described in Isaiah 54!), there's one thing everyone needs to do--and that is to "receive it" (Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "as a gift of God, not of works, and by faith alone")! Constable notes that "in view of what God would do for humankind" (as described in Isaiah 53 and 54), people need to actually "appropriate" the salvation that He has provided"!

Motyer compares Isaiah 55 with the Gospel of John "in its passionate appeal for people to open their eyes to the richness of the gifts that God is offering so freely and to grasp them by faith and through repentance while there is yet time"! (And we're reminded that "there was a purchase that had to be made and a price that had to be paid, but not by us! His the price, ours the freeness"! He purchased our pardon! Jesus paid it all!)

Interestingly, Isaiah, in Isaiah 55, first gets the attention of his readers with the word "Ho!" which Delitzsch interprets as "Hey there!" "Hey, there, everyone of you who thirsts, come to the waters...And you who have no money, come, buy, and eat"! And He follows that, beginning in verse 3, with a plethora of imperatives which Westermann likens to "the cries of street vendors pleading for us to

incline our ear and come to Him"! "Listen that you may live," He adds! "And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David!"

(The "water metaphor" is used frequently in the Bible! Jesus, in fact, used it most memorably, in John 4:7-14, when He spoke with the Samaritan women (at the well!), promising her "living water," and saying that "whoever drinks of the water that I give him will never thirst; but that the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life"! And in John 7:37-39, where (John writes), "on the last day of the great day of the feast, He (Jesus) stood up and cried out, saying (drawing on the words of Isaiah 55:1), "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink"! Adding that, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water"!)

Then verses 6-7, which MacArthur calls "the clearest invitation in the Old Testament to salvation now and kingdom blessings later--and gives an excellent example of how people were saved during the Old Testament period"! "Salvation grace and mercy," he says, "was available to those willing to seek the Lord. and call on Him while He was still available"! And that "such true seeking in faith is accompanied by repentance, which is described as forsaking ones' ways and thoughts and turning from sinful living to the Lord"! A sinner must come, MacArthur continues, "by believing in God, recognizing his sin, and desiring forgiveness and deliverance. At that time he must also recognize his own inability to be righteous, or satisfy God, and cast himself on God's mercy! It is then that he receives complete pardon, with his sins covered by the substitution of the Messiah"! He also notes that "this Old Testament pattern is best illustrated by Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector," in Luke 18:9-14 (and the heartfelt words, "God, be merciful to me a sinner"!)

But is there a particular time to seek, and call, upon Him? Isaiah indicates there is! You (we) need to "call upon Him while He may be found; and while He is near"! Wow! Note the urgency! Motyer says we could translate Isaiah 55:6 as, 'while He permits Himself to be found," indicating that there's a "divinely appointed day of grace and salvation"!

Most importantly, Isaiah 53 illustrates the importance of God's word in producing His intended spiritual purposes in our lives! Just as "rain and snow from heaven brings blessing because it nourishes the earth," so the Word of God, Motyer notes, "plants the seeds of repentance in the heart and feeds the returning sinner with the blessed consequences repentance produces"! (Interestingly, Motyer writes that the whole chapter of Isaiah 55 "pivots on the call to repent"--noting "what a wonderful thing repentance must be if it can bridge the gap" between a transcendent God and sinful man--with a God "whose thoughts are not our thoughts and ways not our ways, and which are so much higher than ours"! And he concludes that it's the Lord who "wills and effectuates the repentance which brings sinners home to Himself, into the freedom of His banqueting hall"! The Word of God!

"So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it!" (Isaiah 55:11, KJV) And when it accomplishes its ultimate purpose--and the "curse (that followed the fall in Genesis 3:17) is lifted" (and Christ returns to set up His millennial kingdom), not only will we "go out with joy and be led forth with peace" but, Isaiah says, "the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy...and all the trees of the field will clap their hands"! (Romans 8:19 says "the anxious longings of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God"! ) And transformed people in a transformed world will be "an everlasting memorial to the Lord"!

Ho! What a day that will be!

As "men of the Bible," how thankful we should be for God's blessed, inspired Word which is being used to accomplish His eternal purpose in our world, and in our lives!

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