

"I will welcome you into My holy mountain and make you joyful in My house of prayer! I will accept every sacrifice and offering that you place on My altar, for My house of worship will be known as a house of prayer for all people"! (Isaiah 55:7, Passion version)

Following our lessons on the great prophetic chapters of Isaiah 53-54--where Isaiah pictures Christ as the "Lamb of God" who (as prefigured in Levitical law!) would be offered as the supreme sacrifice (the "sacrificial atonement") for sin--Isaiah, in Isaiah 55, makes it clear that, as the next step, people need to "appropriate" the benefits that would be available to all (everyone!) as a result of Christ's redemptive work!

Remember the "water metaphor" and the invitation (in 55:1) for "everyone (everyone!) who thirsts, to come to the waters"! And further instructions (in verses 2-7) to "listen carefully to Me (the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel!) that you may live...eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance...and He "will make an everlasting covenant with you"! And don't delay! It's urgent, notes Isaiah! "Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near! And let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord...and He will have compassion and abundantly pardon"!

Wow! No wonder Motyer would compare 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 still time"! And why MacArthur would call it "the clearest invitation in the Old Testament to salvation now and kingdom blessings later"!

Jesus would later draw on this passage, and these analogies, in John 6:35, where He told the crowd of people following Him in Capernaum that He was that very "bread of life, and that he who comes to Him would never hunger"! And, in John 4:7-25, where He told the "woman at the well" (a Samaritan woman, of all people!) that "whoever would drink the water that I will give him will never thirst, but that the water I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life"! And later, in John 7:37-39, when on the last day of the great feast, He stood up and cried out, saying, "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"!

And we also saw in last week's lesson how God uses His Word, the inspired "Word of God," to produce His intended purposes in our world, and in our lives! In verses 10-11, he writes, "Just as rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return without watering the earth, making it bring forth and sprout...so will His word be that which goes forth from His mouth; it will not return to Him empty without accomplishing what He desires, and without succeeding in the matter for which He sends it"! (Motyer notes how the Word of God "plants the seed of repentance in the heart--that 'wonderful thing that bridges the gap between a transcendent God and sinful man--and feeds the repentant sinner with the blessed consequences repentance produces"! Wow!

And when His purposes are (ultimately!) accomplished, Isaiah says (in verse 12) "the mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy...and all the trees will clap their hands"!

Setting us up for our lesson last night on Isaiah 56--which begins with Isaiah's prophecy, and God's promise, that "His salvation is about to come and His righteousness is to be revealed"! And, even better, that it will be available to everyone! Even to "foreigners and eunuchs who were (previously)

"excluded, by law from participating in Israel's worship rituals" (as noted in Exodus 12:43 and Deuteronomy 23:1)!

And thus, with a sense of urgency, Isaiah records God's call for action, on our part, in Isaiah 56!

"Preserve justice and do righteousness," says the Lord...and blessed is the man who does it, and the son of man who takes hold of it; who keeps from profaning the sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil"! And (even!) for the eunuchs "who keep My sabbath, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant"! To them (even them!) I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; an everlasting name which will not be cut off"! Wow!

And (even!) "for the foreigners also who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants; every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast to My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar, for My house will be called a house of prayer for all peoples"! Wow!

(Sounds at first glance almost like Isaiah is teaching "salvation by works," but we soon realize that this can't be the case, for the Scripture is clear, and history is proof, that no one could ever attain it by keeping the law, and by works alone. Romans 3:20 says, "By the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin"! And Ephesians 2:8-9 says that it's by grace that we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves! It's a gift of God! Not that works aren't important! MacArthur notes that "obeying God's law, and doing what pleases Him, and desiring to keep His promises are (merely?) the evidence that one has been truly saved, and will enjoy all salvation's blessings"!)

(This passage, on the other hand, gives us a new appreciation for God's grace and mercy, and divine providence (exhibited in Acts 8:26-40) in sending Philip to "open his mouth and preach Jesus" to the Ethiopian eunuch who was gloriously converted; and in His divine intervention in the life of a Moabite woman, named Ruth, who would be joined with Boaz and included in the physical lineage of Christ!)

But Isaiah's not finished with his revelations from God! "The Lord God (he writes in verse 8), who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, 'Yet others (speaking of Gentiles?) I will gather to them, to those already gathered"! Another wow!

Reminding us of Jesus' intercessory prayer (in the garden, before the cross, in John 17:17-20), where He prayed first for His disciples, "that they would be sanctified in the truth of His Word... but not for them alone, but for those also who would believe in Him through their words (the words of the disciples who He was sending into the world!), that they may all be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me"!

Mark 13:24-27 says there's a day coming "when the Son of Man will come in the clouds with great power and glory to gather the elect...from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of heaven"! What a day that will be!

But, sadly, not everyone will be included! Isaiah 56 ends with another commentary (in verses 9-12) on Israel's false prophets and irresponsible religious leaders who, rather than "gathering" the people together before God, would lead them astray!

But thank God for His Word, and for God's elect (and the MOB!), and for His grace and mercy, and for His house of prayer!

May God be with you!

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