

Isaiah 55 3-5 Feb 24

**3 Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you-- The sure mercies of David.**

**4 Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people.**

**5 Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations *who* do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."**

What does it mean to listen to God? We talked last week about listening isn't primarily waiting for our spiritual phone to ring. It isn't primarily about waiting for and expecting perceptions. Certainly that happens, but that is not primarily what this is talking about.

How we hear from God is to read what He has said. Now that seems almost too obvious to be stated. But it has to be stated. Because the minute we start using our imaginations to interpret the verse we get into trouble. There is a massive bunch of stuff that passes for listening to God. Mike used to call it contemplating one's naval.

The hearing from God that we must do is based upon content that has come from God. And the only content we have that we are sure about is God's Word. So if we want to incline our ears to God, and hear from God, we must direct our minds specifically on the words of God. And like we pointed out last week, that is how we **come** to God.

**Incline your ear and come to me.** This is talking about going to God's word as if it knows **everything** and I know **nothing**. I don't go looking to **give** advice. I go looking to **get it**. I don't go looking to correct what God has said. I go looking for it to correct me. I go at it with an open mind, doing my best to overcome all of my biases about **what it couldn't possibly mean** and read it to see what **it does mean**. To incline means to literally bend away. But it carries with it the idea of compliance. That is how we are to go to God's word. The hardest part with 90% of God's word is not in understanding it. It is in bending my knee to it. It is in submitting to it. It is allowing it to overcome my excuses and resistance and pride and what I think I know. God **allows** some things in scripture that Christians are slow to admit. It also **forbids** some things that we have learned to accept. And it is hard on us when we have thought something all of our lives to find out that we were wrong about it. Inclining means we take those blows to our pride and intellect and even reputation and say **"Yes Lord"**.

When it says **Hear, and your soul shall live**, it does not mean if the words enter our eardrums we will live. We all know that. It means to hear it in such a way that we submit to it. This is what we must teach any future person we get to disciple. We are to teach them to **obey Christ** the way **we obey Him**. Here is a spot for a good question. If they were to obey like we obey, how vibrant of a Christian life would they have? How much could we depend upon them to overcome their strong desires to do specifically what God commands, to think what God says is true, to do the hard things God's word calls us to. How good is our inclining?

But the truth here is also amazing as much as it is challenging. If we will listen to and believe and obey the word of God, we will live forever. Now we know that our obedience does not **earn** our salvation in any way to any degree. But our willingness to hear and submit is clear evidence that the miracle of salvation has been performed on our hearts. No one sincerely and wholeheartedly submits to God if they do not have a relationship with Him.

**<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live;**

We have got to understand that **energetic and honest listening** to God's word is the **same** as **coming to God**. Do you want to come to God? Do you want a deeper relationship to Him? Pray to God to open your eyes so that you can obey. And then read God's word to obey God and know Him better. That is coming to God. And it won't just happen to you. The Bible will not open itself and follow you around the house. It is something that we must prioritize. We must have a plan. We must have our own personal legalisms. And again, it is not just about reading it. It is not just about understanding the words on the page. It is at least that. But it is much more. It is bending our stubborn will to let our Lord and Master have His way with every word. That is coming to God in the way that a saved person comes.

**And I will make an everlasting covenant with you-- The sure mercies of David.**

Here we see the context that The Sure mercies of David was used in the New Testament.

**Vs 3 Acts 13:30-37 (NKJV)**

**<sup>30</sup> But God raised Him from the dead.**

**<sup>31</sup> He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.**

**<sup>32</sup> And we declare to you glad tidings--that promise which was made to the fathers.**

**<sup>33</sup> God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I**

*have begotten You.'*

<sup>34</sup> **And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'**

<sup>35</sup> **Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'**

<sup>36</sup> **"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;**

<sup>37</sup> **but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.**

From everything I read it seems that the reasoning goes like this. God is making a covenant with the true people of God. But the covenant is based upon the covenant that He has already made with David. It is an application of that covenant, an extension of it.

**1 Kings 8:22-26 (NKJV)**

<sup>22</sup> **Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven;**

<sup>23</sup> **and he said: "LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.**

<sup>24</sup> **You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled *it* with Your hand, as *it is* this day.**

<sup>25</sup> **Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.'**

<sup>26</sup> **And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father.**

We see that Solomon understood that the covenant applied to the true people of God. And He saw it, too, as an extension of mercy. It was withholding from the people the judgment they deserved. The covenant was all about blessing the people with special relationship with God. It was a provision of hope to people who live on a planet that appears hopeless.

<sup>4</sup> **Indeed I have given him *as* a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people.**

Now Isaiah gets more specific. He is talking about Christ. Christ is the descendant of David who will have a son of David on the throne forever. And Christ is that Son of David. In verse 3 the mercies are promised. In verse 4 they are delivered.

It is Christ who will be the Son of David that fulfills so many of the prophecies. It is Christ who will be the deliverer.

Now look where it says that God has given Christ as a witness to the people. A witness, in this sense, is one who will be accepted to bear a true testimony.

### **John 15:15 (NKJV)**

**15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.**

### **John 14:7-11 (NKJV)**

**7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."**

**8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."**

**9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"**

**10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own *authority*; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.**

**11 Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.**

Could you ever have a better witness than this. Christ perfectly represented His Father's will. Nothing Christ said went outside of what His father willed. Immanuel means God with us. And that was a name for Christ. Christ was the perfect witness. And He testified to men about God. He spoke the truth about what He knew and experienced. We could know God by knowing Christ. We could hear from the Father by hearing from the Son.

Witnesses testify. Look at what scripture tells us.

### **John 3:10-12 (NKJV)**

**10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"**

**11 Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.**

**12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"**

Jesus was testifying to God's plan of salvation to Nicodemus. But His testimony was not believed.

### **John 5:36-40 (NKJV)**

**36 But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do--bear witness of**

**Me, that the Father has sent Me.**

**37 And the Father Himself, who sent Me, has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form.**

**38 But you do not have His word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.**

**39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.**

**40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.**

Christ was testifying that He was the one sent by God. He was the Messiah to save the world from their sin. But they would not listen to the testimony of the Father. Although Christ was the perfect witness and His testimony was absolutely true, again they could not hear it. Then He goes on to say that this is a double crime. The Father testifies of Christ, the perfect witness. But the hearers would not believe God. Then the scriptures testify of Christ. But they don't believe them either. But **had they believed** the testimony of God and **had they believed** of the testimony of Scriptures, **they would have** believed the true witness. And they would have had life. It is amazing how congruent the truth in scripture is, even though it was written over a couple of thousand years. If we come to Christ by believing His word we will have life.

Now not all of Christ's testifying is seen as being positive.

**John 7:7 (NKJV)**

**7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil.**

Christ testifies about salvation. He testifies about His father. His Father and the word testifies about us. But Christ also testifies about people. And if Christ is testifying about unsaved people, the testimony is always bad. We can always expect that there will be some enmity between believers and unbelievers. The fighting words don't always come out. The points of conflict aren't always escalated. But when Christ evaluates the actions of those who resist His saving work, He has nothing good to say. He cuts to the quick. And it hurts.

When we are doing evangelism, it is very important that we testify the way Christ testifies. Sometimes that is bad news. We need to tell the truth about what God says about our efforts as unregenerate human beings. They are worthless. In fact, they are worse than worthless. A clean rag has a use. But a filthy rag is a major nuisance. Scripture does not say all our righteousness, all the goodness we drum up is like an old rag. It says it is like filthy rags.

There's no good news to be found in that arena.

Then again in verse 4-

**4 Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people.**

So not only is Christ a witness. He is also the leader and the commander for His people. **Leader** may refer to the person according to **their position** and authority. While **Commander** may refer to the **work that He does**. Many scholars believe this is talking about the work of prophet and king. Normally Christ is understood as Prophet Priest and King. He fulfilled all those roles perfectly. But this passage only emphasizes two of the three.

The word for leader is often used as king. A king has ultimate authority. We don't have a king. And I don't think we would like it much if we did. But we have the idea that a king rules. And what a king says, goes. Would it not be refreshing if the church of Christ acted like Jesus was their king? Would it not be nice to walk into every church knowing that any person in that church would conform their behavior to whatever Christ said. And if their behavior was contrary to what Christ said, we could assume that it was only because they did not know what Christ said. As soon as we tell them what Christ said, they would do it. Because Jesus is king.

Is that true of us this morning? Is Jesus really our king. Ignorance is so easy to overcome. A little bit of information and the problem is fixed. But that is hardly ever the problem for us. Stubbornness and self will is usually our problem. And no amount of information will fix that. We must bow. We must submit. We must repent. And that is no fun.

Commander- This means to give an order or command. Christ commands lots of things. And He is never apologetic about it. He is the King. He is the creator. He knows what is best for us. He knows what He desires. He owns us because He has bought us. He has every right to command us to do as He pleases and to think as He wants us to think. Again, it is easy when presenting the Gospel to soft sell this truth. But the discipleship book does a good job on focusing on our need to comply to our King's wishes and to go by His commands. We cannot tell people to come to Christ in such a way that Jesus is an added bonus to life as usual. It is not **my normal life** with the **addition** of Jesus. We are switching kingdoms. And while in the old kingdom the king was sneaky and manipulative, this new King is upfront and straight forward. He will tell us exactly what He expects and it is our obligation to do what He says. That is the negative slant on authority. The positive slant is that the whole process is designed to prepare us for an eternity that is good beyond our wildest imagination. But we must **witness to the truth** when we witness to non believers. Jesus said if we are to come to Him we are to take up our

cross, our instrument of death, and follow Him. Jesus is King and Commander of this kingdom.

**<sup>5</sup> Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations *who* do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you."**

Here is what Christ is doing right now. He is calling foreigners to Himself. And we are those foreigners. We were not Israelites. We did not know God's law. We did not know Israel's true King. We were clueless. But God led people like Paul to leave their comfortable lives and spend their lives spreading the gospel. So 2000 years later here we are with millions of believers in the US.

And isn't the imagery fitting. When some people see Christ, His beauty draws them irresistibly. They don't give up in some gloomy resignation that they can do no other. No. They **run** to Christ. And if we could see everything from the light of eternity, **every single one of us would run to Christ**. And if the world had a heart to see it, **they too** would run to Christ. We could not get to Him quick enough. That is the nature of His beauty and goodness. The most self serving thing we can ever do in our lifetimes is to run to Christ.

Now again, why does this happen? Because people get real smart? That is not what this "**because**" says. It is because God the Father has glorified His Son. Now we might ask why God would love His Son so.

The Son performed the will of God so perfectly, and portrayed God's love so fully. How could His Father not be pleased?

John Flavel, the Puritan pastor, with his antiquated English, helps us imagine the conversation between the Father and the Son in eternity past:

**Father:** My Son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice. Justice demands satisfaction for them or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them. What shall be done for these souls?

**Son:** O my Father, such is my love and pity for them that, rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety. Bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee. Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them. At my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than **they** should suffer it. Upon **me**, my Father, upon me be all their debt.

**Father:** But my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last cent. Expect no discounts. If I spare **them**, I will not spare **thee**.

**Son:** Content, Father. Let it be so. Charge it all to me. I am able to pay it. And though it prove a kind of **undoing to me**, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures, yet I am content to undertake it.

Our salvation is more than a decision we made in time. It flows from a covenant made in eternity. And the Father delights to keep his covenant with his beloved Son by drawing us into the everlasting love of the Triune Godhead ([John 17:24-26](#)). He directs our attention away from ourselves to the messianic figure ordained for our salvation:

*Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.*

Our text was given to us in the context of the suffering servant of Isaiah 52 and 53. It is an appeal to come to that Messiah. It is a challenge to give up spending our resources on those things that do not satisfy and come to Christ, to run to Him if we have any sense at all.

I would like to end with one more quote from our Brother Ortland

**When we suffer and our self-pity rages at God and we snuggle up to our most comforting lies, how do we find our way back? Seeing through our lies isn't enough. The only way back is to look again at the servant of the Lord. We despised him and rejected him as he suffered. But he was bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows. The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. But he didn't open his mouth against us or against God. In fact, he makes blasphemers to be accounted righteous. Looking again at him can calm our shrieking hatred and restore us to sanity.**

*Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.*