

SEEK YE THE LORD

TEXT: ISA. 55:1-13

Introduction:

1. One of life's great mysteries is why seemingly intelligent, seemingly decent, seemingly well-educated people turn their backs on God. My message this evening is from Isaiah, chapter 55, and I'd like to focus particularly on verses 6 and 7.
2. I think one of the reasons so many people are lost is that they are confused as to what it means to be saved. The Biblical doctrine of salvation is not being clearly proclaimed. Indeed, many Christians have observed that America is now a "post-Christian" nation. That is another way of saying we have become a heathen nation.
3. Isaiah describes the average person today in 55:2. They "labor for that which satisfieth not." The Bible tells us that money cannot satisfy. Prosperity cannot satisfy. Materialism cannot satisfy.
4. People work hard to buy more things and bigger homes and nicer cars and fancy clothes and so on, and they are more miserable than ever. Some take drugs. Some drink alcohol. Some go to psychiatrists. Some go to psychics and fortunetellers. Some even put a gun to their head and kill themselves. If only they would seek God (55:6).
5. Robert Burns is the national poet of Scotland. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says he was very successful and well-loved but he "remained restless and dissatisfied." He was a rebel who died at the age of 37 after a life of dissipation. Listen to his words:
 But pleasures are like poppies spread –
 You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
 Or like the snow falls in the river –
 A moment white – then melts forever.
 Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
 Vanishing amid the storm.
6. Oh, the folly of a wasted life; of a godless life; of a hopeless life. The LORD says, "Come" three times here (55:1).
7. Sometimes people ask, "Why does this church always give a public invitation?" Because it is Biblical (cf. Rev. 22:17).
8. Not only does God say, "Come," He says, "hearken diligently unto me" (55:2), and "Incline your ear, and come unto me" (55:3). These are gracious invitations.
9. Let us look at God's gracious invitation.

I. GOD'S GRACIOUS INVITATION (ISA. 55: 1-5)

1. One of the most wonderful words in the Bible is "come" (55:1).
2. Gen. 7:1 says, "And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark."
3. Isa. 1:18 says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."
4. Our Lord said in Matt. 11:28, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
5. Our Lord said in John 7:37, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."
6. Our Lord said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37).
7. And here, in Isaiah 55, "everyone that thirsteth" is invited to come (55:1). Let me ask you tonight, "Do you have a sincere thirst for God?"
8. The Psalmist wrote, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Ps. 42:1, 2).
9. David wrote in Psalm 63:1, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is."
10. And David said in Psalm 143:6, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah."
11. Our Lord said in John 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."
12. This gracious invitation is found all throughout the Bible, right up to the very last chapter (Rev. 22:17).
13. In the Bible, water, wine and milk are often used figuratively, and here they represent salvation (Isa. 55:1). Notice that it is "without money and without price."
14. Salvation is freely offered to all. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9; cf. Isa. 64:6).
15. There was an artist who wanted to paint a picture of the Prodigal Son. He searched throughout all the madhouses, the poorhouses, and the prisons, to find some wretched man scurvy enough to represent the Prodigal Son, but he could not find the right one.

16. Then one day he was walking down the street and met a man whom he thought would be suitable and so he told him he would pay him well if he came to his studio and sat for his portrait. The beggar agreed, and the day was appointed for him to come.
17. The day came, and a man arrived at the artist's studio but the artist did not recognize him. "I never saw you before," he said; but the man insisted, "Yes, you agreed to meet me here at 10:00 a.m." "You must be mistaken," said the artist. "The man I agreed to paint was a scurvy-looking beggar." "Well," said the man, "I am he. I thought since you were going to paint my portrait and pay me so much money, that I would shave and take a bath and put on some nice clothes." "Then I do not want you," said the artist. "I wanted you the way you were before; now, you are of no use to me."
18. That is the way salvation is: "Just as I am without one plea" (Isa. 55:1). Don't wait till you get yourself cleaned up. Just come.
19. Let me ask you an important question: Are you dissatisfied with the life you are living? Has religion left you empty? Do you have a difficult time understanding the Bible? Do you feel that there must be more to life than go to work, go to church, and then die? Then "come ye to the waters."
20. Are you dissatisfied with your second-rate, wishy-washy type of religion? Then "come ye to the waters."
21. Are you dissatisfied with what the world has to offer? Then "come ye to the waters." When he reached old age, the English Prime Minister Disraeli said: "Youth is a mistake, manhood a struggle, old age a regret." Beloved, it does not have to be that way.

II. GOD'S URGENT EXHORTATION (55:6-9)

1. This is a very urgent exhortation: "Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (55:6). This means God will not always be around. He will not always be near.
2. Have you ever read about the conversion of Billy Sunday, the great evangelist? He was a well-known baseball player before he got saved. One Sunday afternoon, Billy Sunday was walking around the streets of Chicago with a few baseball friends. Some workers from the Pacific Garden Mission were holding a meeting in a vacant lot. Billy and his friends stopped to listen to the music and the preaching.
3. The Gospel songs brought back precious childhood memories for Billy Sunday and soon he was crying uncontrollably. One man from the

- Mission said, “We’re going back to the Mission. Won’t you come? I’m sure you’ll enjoy it.”
4. Billy Sunday told his friends he was going to the Mission to get saved but the other men would not go. Some of them laughed and mocked. One offered encouragement but would not go himself. Some never said a word. Billy Sunday got saved that day at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. He went on to become one of the greatest preachers of the 20th century.
 5. One of the baseball players who refused to get saved that day was a player named Frank Flint. Flint caught before they had chest protectors, masks, and gloves. He caught the balls bare-handed and broke every bone in the ball of his hand. Every bone in his face was broken, and his nose and cheekbones, shoulder, and ribs had all been broken.
 6. He became a big drinker and broke up his home. One night he staggered out of a bar, drunk and coughing uncontrollably. Blood was coming out his nose, mouth, and eyes. His wife found him out on the street and called two policemen and they rushed him in a cab to her boarding house.
 7. The doctor came and said: “Frank, the end is near,” and he said, “Send for Billy Sunday.” They called Billy Sunday and he rushed over. Frank Flint said: “There’s nothing in life that I care for now. I can hear the people in the grandstands cheering, but it means nothing now.”
 8. His last words to Billy Sunday were, “If the Umpire calls me out now, Billy, won’t you say a few words over me?” Billy Sunday said the big man struggled as he had years ago when he tried to reach home – but the great Umpire of the universe yelled, “You’re out!” and Frank Flint was gone.
 9. Billy Sunday would often tell the story of Frank Flint. He said, “He sat with me on the street corner with me, drunk, years ago in Chicago when I said, ‘Good-bye, boys, I’ve had enough.’” But Frank Flint would not heed God’s urgent exhortation. And he continued to drink. And he died and went to hell.
 10. Beloved, God’s urgent exhortation is an exhortation to repent (55:7). We do not hear the word “repent” these days. And we do not hear the word “sin” very often either.
 11. And the #1 thing that keeps people from God is SIN (Isa. 55:6, 7). Jeremy Taylor described sin this way: “First it startles man, then it becomes pleasing, then delightful, then frequent, then habitual, then confirmed, then the man is impenitent, then obstinate, then resolved never to repent, then damned.”

12. Oh, the folly of unbelief! People refuse to get right with God, they refuse to give up their favorite sins – they need to “seek the Lord” (55:6) and “forsake” their wicked ways (55:7). They need to call upon Him “while He is near” (55:6) — tomorrow may be too late!
13. Some people cannot understand 55:6 – they do not understand how a lost sinner, blinded by the devil, can seek the Lord. Beloved, it is only by the grace of God. Jesus said: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37).
14. God’s ways are so much higher than our ways that we can never really understand the deep things of God (55:8, 9) – they are beyond our comprehension – God thinks and acts in ways that transcend anything man could ever imagine. For example, man could never in a million years come up with plan of salvation. The great poet and hymn writer William Cowper wrote a beautiful poem called “Truth”:

O how unlike the complex works of man,
 Heav’n’s easy, artless, unencumbered plan;
 No meretricious grace to beguile,
 No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;
 From ostentation, as from weakness, free,
 It stands like the cerulian arch we see,
 Majestic in its own simplicity.
 Inscribed above the portal, from afar
 Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
 Legible only by the light they give,
 Stand the soul-quickenings words – Believe, and live.

III. GOD’S STRONG WARNING

1. Many people have the notion that they can get things right with God at the last minute. This is foolish thinking. Note that God says, “while He may be found” and “while He is near” (55:6). As I said before, this teaches us that God will not always be near.
2. I read a good sermon by Dr. W. A. Criswell, a well-known pastor from Texas, about “deathbed repentance.” He is convinced that the vast majority of so-called deathbed conversions are bogus. He reminds us that when a sinner leaves God out of his life day after day, and year after year, he gets hardened.
3. Dr. Criswell spoke of a famous English physician who studied hundreds of cases of deathbed repentance. He made notes of them through the years and recorded the cases in which the man recovered. This physician reported that in a lifetime of observation, of the hundreds of men who

- recovered and lived, only one continued in the Christian faith. Criswell added that this has also been his experience.
4. Dr. Criswell spoke of a famous businessman who was very sick in a hospital in Dallas. He said to Dr. Criswell, “The doctors say I will surely die. Will you kneel down by my side and pray? Tell God that if He will spare my life, I will serve Him all the rest of my days. You will see me in every service at your church. I will be a faithful servant of God.”
 5. Pastor Criswell knelt down by his side and held his hand, and asked God to spare his life, and that if God would spare his life this man would serve Him the rest of his days. The man said, “Amen.”
 6. God answered that prayer and blessed that man. He was soon out of the hospital; he gained strength, and lived for many more years. But Dr. Criswell said he never bothered to attend church even one time. He forgot all about his promise to God. He died without Christ and without hope.
 7. Unsaved friend: “Seek ye the LORD while He may be found” (55:6).

CONCLUSION:

1. The Bible says, “Let the wicked FORSAKE his way...” (55:7). Beloved, we need to see sin the way God sees it. I remember being here one day when two of our sewer drains backed up. As the filthy, smelly sludge oozed up out of the drain, I said to one of the men from our church. “What a vivid picture of sin!” The smell was so bad, the man was gagging.
2. I quoted William Cowper before. He also wrote that great hymn “There is a Fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins. And sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.”
3. “Let the wicked forsake his way...” (Isa. 55:7). A young man said to DL Moody, “I am going to turn over a new leaf.” Moody replied, “Young man, you have got to turn yourself over. I have turned over many a new leaf, and it soon got as dirty as the old ones. New leaves won’t do; it’s yourself you’ve got to turn over”