

Is. 55:6-9 (LD 46) “His Ways”

For the Children: People often assume that others are just like them. A thief may expect everyone else to steal from him; a violent person expects that others are always looking for a fight; a liar assumes that others are always lying to him. Many people also think that God is like them – that He will not keep His Word, will not truly forgive those who wrong Him and is not able to do everything others ask of Him. But God is not like us – though He is teaching us to be a little bit like His Son. He is able to do anything. He also wants to help us, because He loves us as our heavenly Father. He does so because Jesus died for us. That is why He forgives our sins. Whatever He promises us in His Word, we can be sure that He will deliver! Questions: What are some of the ways in which God is not like a man? Why is He called “Our Father”? How does all this help us to pray?

Introduction:

First Point: The God Who Is in Heaven

- 1) Not Like Us: Q121 interprets “Who art in heaven,” in the Lord’s Prayer, to mean that we must not pray to God as if we were seeking help from someone like us – a limited and sinful creature. His majesty is of a “heavenly” kind. His power is infinite. He is able to give us whatever help we need. A similar point is made in Is. 55:9.
- 2) How He Is Different: What particular differences between God and man are in view in Is. 55? His sovereignty – the way His Word always accomplishes His purposes (v. 10); His righteousness, in contrast to Israel’s wicked ways and thoughts; also His mercy, which is beyond the comprehension of unforgiving, spiteful sinners. Other variations on these themes include the fact that God does not lie, change His mind or find Himself unable to keep His promises; does not seek revenge; or take a bribe. See also Num. 23:19. We should actually say that in *every attribute* God is not like a man!
- 3) The Relevance to Prayer: Is. 55 is giving God’s people reasons to pray – to “seek the Lord.” One of those reasons is the assurance that God is able to supply what we need. If we doubt that, our prayers may not be heeded. The other reason is that we are to praise God, in prayer, for Who He is. That means recognizing that His attributes are not projections of us to create a “Big Man” – which is an idol-god of man’s invention. Our prayers need to be more and more shaped by God’s Word, rather than being shaped by a human view of self.

Second Point: The Father Who Has Compassion

- 1) Our Father: God is not just the God who is not like us. He has revealed Himself as “Our heavenly *Father*.” As Q120 points out, this is said from the start of the Lord’s Prayer to kindle in us a child-like awe and trust of God. To see ourselves as His children, we need to see that He is our Father because He has adopted us through the work of His Son. The Lord Jesus also provides the only basis for confidence that God will act Fatherly toward us by giving us only good things we ask for in faith. See Mt. 7:7-11. Of course, God is also an infinitely better Father than earthly fathers (Heb. 12:4f).
- 2) Fatherly Compassion: Is. 55:6-7 gives evidence of God’s Fatherly attitude to us in Christ. When His people repent, He has compassion on them and abundantly forgives them.. v.8 goes on to imply that this is further evidence that God is not like man.
- 3) To Encourage Prayer: Isaiah says these things to encourage Israel to seek God’s mercy in prayer. “Seeking” God means wanting, with your whole heart, to have God as your God, to enjoy fellowship with Him, to have His help and salvation, to honour, serve and obey Him. But there is an urgency here: He must be sought while He may be found, “Today” – for if we put Him off, He may not allow Himself to be found later. That is another reason why prayer is so important: for seeking the Lord – also when we have sinned. If He were like us, such prayers would get nowhere!

Conclusion: