

# Green And Blue Lights For Seekers

*Murray 2014*

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Let's turn again to Isaiah 55. Isaiah 55, verse 6,

6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

Children, I'm sure you've had the experience of losing something that was very precious and valuable to you. It may have been a favorite book or a favorite toy or a favorite ball or maybe even the experience of losing a younger brother or sister in a crowded place and when you lose something like that or someone like that, of course, you become very single-minded and very focused, very determined about finding again what you have lost. You become, as it were, a seeker, a searcher.

I want you to keep that image in mind as we look at this verse today because you'll see the first word and the most important word in this text is "seek." Seek the Lord. There is just one very important difference I'd like to highlight before we look at this text in more detail. Obviously, when we lose a ball or a toy or a book, it's the toy or the book that's lost. We're not lost but that thing is. But here when we are being told to seek the Lord, it's not saying that it's the Lord that's lost. It's actually the seekers who are lost in this case and who need to be found.

But the seekers have to seek and that's what we would like to look at today under two headings. We want to look, first of all, at green lights for seekers and then at blue lights for seekers. First of all, green lights and by that we mean, of course, encouragements from God's word that make us go. Just as you're sitting at the traffic lights waiting for them to turn green and when they turn green, off you go, we'd like to look a number of encouragements from God's word that say to us, "Go"; that put, as it were, fuel in our tanks for seeking the Lord. We need that because, as we'll see, none of us naturally seek the Lord.

So what is the first green light for seekers? Seek ye the Lord. Well, the first one is this: God's command. God's command. How do I know if I should seek? Well, it's very straightforward: you're commanded to. It's not dependent on, "Do I feel a certain way then I can start seeking? Or have I thought certain thoughts or done certain things?" No,

this seeking is not conditional upon any kinds of feelings, any kinds of thoughts or any kinds of deeds. The only warrant we need is God's command. If God commands something, he wants it to happen. He desires it to happen. And God is saying to us here today that it doesn't matter if you're lacking in certain feelings: spiritual feelings, spiritual thoughts, spiritual activities. It doesn't matter if you feel you're not qualified. Here you have a very plain and simple command that expresses the will of God for everyone who hears it. Seek the Lord. Seek the Lord. It's a very plain and a very straightforward command. There are other verses in the Bible that, you might say, invite us to seek or encourage us to seek but this verse commands it. That's the first green for "Go": God's command.

The second green light is: God's work. God's work. These chapters, this book was addressed originally to the people of Israel, southern Israel, Judah who had been taken captive into Babylon, at least the latter part of this book. The first part of the book was addressed to Israel before they went into Babylon and it was saying to them, "Repent and trust in the Lord and find mercy." But then from chapter 40 onwards, the book is assuming Israel didn't listen, that they went into captivity and there, of course, lumping into despondency and despair about God's providence and his dealings with them, they would wonder surely like all of us would, "Is there any future? Is there any hope?" And so the second part of Isaiah, chapter 40 onwards, is so much more full of hope and encouragement and it's saying, "Even in Babylon, come and read Isaiah 40-66 and find huge encouragement and comfort for you in your predicament and know this: God has not forgotten you."

So if you read these chapters, you'll find so many calls to repentance and calls to trust and promises that if they do they will be returned to their land and if we focus in on the few chapters around this chapter, we find a beautiful order of God's work. In chapter 53, of course, the best known chapter in Isaiah, we have God's work of redemption, describing to us Christ prophetically and all that he would do in dying in the place of sinners. Then in chapter 54, we have the results of that redemption, objective and subjective results. Results in the world and results in men's and women's hearts. Then in Isaiah 55, we have the response to that; the response to God's redemption. The response to the results of it and notice it all begins in verse 1 with, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, and he that hath no money; come buy, and eat," and you'll see this chapter is saying, "What kind of response should there be? There should be a coming. There should be a thirsting. There should be a drinking. There should be an eating. There should be a delighting," and here in our verse 6, "There should be a seeking."

But all these responses are based upon God's prior work. He's saying, "Be encouraged to seek by all that I have already done. Be encouraged to seek by what I've done in Isaiah 53. Be encouraged to seek by what I've done in Isaiah 54. Be encouraged to seek by my work of redemption and by the blessed results that are flowing out still over all the world." Surely, when you see such a God and such a work of God, it too is a big green light saying, "Go. Seek this God who has accomplished such a redemption and produced such results. Respond in this way. Seek him."

God's command. God's work. The third green light is: God's seeking. God's seeking. Here we are addressed and our responsibility is emphasized but really when we look behind these words, we see a seeking God. Even in this book of Isaiah, isn't it, it's a book that is seeking sinners. That is calling out to them and is showing them the way to walk and the way to live and the way to respond to God. It's expressing God's heart. You know, children, when you lose your book or your ball and you call out, you know that book and ball is not actually seeking you out, is it? It's not searching for you. It can't. It doesn't have arms or legs or a mouth to shout. But here is the huge encouragement: the Lord is seeking you. The Lord has, as it were, arms and feet and a voice. It isn't just sitting there waiting passively, inactively, inert. No, he is seeking you.

Don't we feel that especially as we read through these verses? We sense it too in the New Testament. You remember Christ's words, "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." These words, remember, are spoken at the end of the incidence with Zaccheus. If you were to ask Zaccheus, "What are you doing, Zaccheus, up that tree?" He would say, "I'm seeking the Lord. I'm searching for Jesus. I'm trying to find him. I'm trying to get myself into a place where I can look on him and hear him and get close to him." That's the sense that Zaccheus had that, "I am seeking God." But what was really happening was that God was seeking him. That's what Jesus really says at the end of the chapter. For all of Zaccheus' seeking, the activity and the salvation of that day is explained by the Lord seeking.

Surely, Israel as well here in Babylon would have felt this and sensed this as they read these words written many, many decades before but still fresh and relevant. These words are from God. That means he's seeking us out. Even if you'll look at the previous verse 5, "Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee." He's not just seeking Israel, he's seeking Gentiles. One of the greatest encouragements to seekers is to know that if they are seeking, there is a seeker behind it and it's God. Any seeking after God that arises in a person's heart did not get there naturally. It came because it was put there. God put it there. God's seeking comes before human seeking.

So if today you are here and you sense there is a loss, there is something missing from your life that you don't have God near and present to you and it's a trouble to you, you wish it wasn't so and you've come to church to see if you could even make a step of progress in that seeking, then on the basis of God's word we can say, "Take this encouragement. God's seeking is going on in your life." That's a huge encouragement, isn't it?

The fourth green light: there was God's nearness. It says here, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." While he is near. Now, for these people who read this verse, God did not seem near based on their previous history because nearness to God meant being in Israel, being in Jerusalem, being in the temple. But here they are being taught: God's not limited and confined to buildings and places. God is near when his word is being read. He's near because he has given us this special guide to him. It's like when you do lose something special and somebody puts a

guidebook in your hand to help you find what you've lost, well what a help. A special guide? That's we have here in God's word.

God has also given us special people to make us sense his nearness. That is God's own people. Seekers should spend time with other seekers and with God's people because God works through that. It's easier to find something, isn't it, when you join together with others? You seek the help of others. Don't do this alone.

God has also given us a special day when he draws near, his Lord's day. You know, if you had lost something and you were told, "You know, on Tuesday, that's the day that soccer balls are usually found." Well, on Tuesday you're going to be out there with double effort, aren't you? Well, Sunday is the day when the Lord is usually found. It's a day for double effort because a day when he doubly draws near.

While he is near suggests that are times when he is not near and times when he is and this is one of the times when he is. This is a time for seekers to be on the alert. God's nearness. You know, when you've lost something or maybe somebody has hidden something from you, you've tried to find it in various places and eventually you might go to them and say, "Would you give us a clue? Just give us an idea. Give us a hint," and maybe that just points you in just the right direction and that's really what we're doing, isn't it, when we come together in public worship like this and also when we pick up God's word on our own in private where we're saying, "Lord, I'm lost. I'm seeking you but give us a clue. Give us a hint." God draws near through his word. God gives hints. God gives us clues.

The fifth green light is: God's openness. His openness. Notice it says, "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found," and it's literally, "while he allows himself to be found or while he permits himself to be found." I don't know if you, maybe fathers or mothers here, played hide-n-seek with their younger children and you felt you hid in a fairly easy place but they can't find you and they're beginning to get upset and so you just maybe just show yourself a little from behind that tree or stick your foot out of the cupboard or something just to allow yourself, as it were, you open up your visibility a bit more. That's the kind of imagery that's here. This is a God who doesn't hide in impossible to find places and hides himself completely and entirely from seeking sinners and makes as difficult as it possibly can be to find him. No, this is a God who desires to be found. Permits himself to be found. Allows himself to be found. Shows enough of himself to be found. He enjoys and delights in being found. God's openness.

Another great green light for us is God's mercy. We've hinted at that already. This was addressed to a people who were captive for their sins. Again, Gentiles were addressed, the peoples that were known as Gentile sinners. These are the kinds of people who are being called. Every kind of sinner. It's showing us that God's mercy is here at work. It may be in your own life there is a sin or a series of sins or a habit that is sinful, maybe a present and maybe something way in the past and to you it's like exclusionary. It makes it impossible that you would ever find God but not in God's mind.

God's mercy is a big green light. If we're dealing with a God who deals with us according as we have sinned, all we see is red. If God's justice is all there is to know about God then it's just red, "Stop. Don't go." But as we read this book and we come across again and again the mercy of God, the mercy of God, the mercy of God, we're seeing green for "Go. Sinner seek the Lord."

Seventh green light is: God's price. God's price. How valuable he is. If you lose a quarter, well you might spend a few minutes looking for it, maybe even an hour or so if you're really needy but you're not going to worry about it next week or next month. It's gone. There are more quarters in the world. But what if it's your little brother or your little sister or your son or your daughter, an infant that's gone missing? Well, it's panic, isn't it because he's worth, she's worth so much more. You're going to look and look and look and look until you find and if you do this for a son or daughter or brother or sister, how much more for God? Think of his value. How much more is he worth. How much more precious. What a treasure.

An eighth green light is: God's logic. Do you know, I think human logic at times is so discouraging. It's so demoralizing. You know, recently I wrote a blog about seeking and one of the responses was, "Hey, how can you say anyone can seek because it says in Romans 3:10, 'There is none that seeks after God?'" I said, "Well, that's it, isn't it? Human logic." Romans 3:10, no one seeks God, therefore there can't be a seeker so don't write about it, don't speak about it. That's human logic and what does it result in? Nothing. Well, there is none that seeks God, may as well just shut up shop or wait or something but not anything constructive.

But it is a verse in the Bible so how do we deal with it? Well, you see, God's logic doesn't always deal with what we perceive to be our logic because, yes, God says and Romans 3:10 and in other places too, there is none that seeks God. There is no one that by nature, by birth, unchanged, untouched by divine hand, that seeks God. No, it doesn't happen. Any seeking as we've already said happens by sovereign divine instigation but God still says, "Seek God. Seek the Lord." That's divine logic. Human logic says, "Well, that verse says don't seek so I shouldn't seek." Divine logic says, "Well, that verse says no one will seek but seek." If God commands it, then I'm called to do it and with the command comes power.

You say, "That doesn't make sense at all." Let me just try and give you a little hint about this. Notice the second part of this says, "call upon him while he is near." Hebrew literature often has parallel statements so there is a first line and then a second that says more or less the same thing but in different words and that's what we have here. Seeking the Lord while he may be found is the same as calling upon him while he is near and we can all call, can't we?

I saw a little intimate video recently where there was a young boy who was on a beach in the south of England on vacation and he was on a body board and a terrible powerful rip current carried him way out into the ocean very rapidly. The video was from a Go Pro camera on the head of the lifeguard as he lay on his surfboard and paddled furiously out

to this young boy and as he went out, you looked at this gray stormy sea and you could see nothing, you could hear nothing but this lifeguard is just furiously paddling with his arms forward, cutting through the waves until eventually you start hearing this, "Help!" This young boy's voice screaming at the top of his lungs and the lifeguard is saying, "Don't worry, buddy, I'm on my way! I'm on my way!" He's shouting across to encourage him. You look at that young boy and you think there's nothing he could do. He couldn't swim against that current. He had an inability but he could call and he did and it guided the lifeguard right to his position until eventually he was able to haul him up onto the board and bring him safely home. It's the same with all of us. Call and he's paddling furiously towards you. Call and he's on his way. God's logic. Work with that, not with human logic.

The last green light here is: God's promise. We read, for example, in two places. IN Jeremiah 29, again, addressed to a people going into captivity, "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity." What a promise. "You will seek me and find me." And, of course, there is the promise of Christ in Matthew 7:7, "Ask, and it will be given; seek, and you shall find, For every one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds."

You know, sometimes when you lose something, maybe a tiny, tiny little piece of jewelry, a ring or something and you lose it in the yard or on the beach, you may look but you know it's hopeless. You're not going to find it. So you take a cursory glance and after a few minutes you say, "Well, I've just got to give up on that." You just know there's no point in wasting time, is there? But when you know, when you are given a divine promise that if you seek him you will find, that's a huge green light, isn't it? This is hopeful, not hopeless because God has promised every seeker of him will find him.

Well, tons of green lights, aren't there? Many, many encouragements to say to you, "Go. Go. Go. Pursue. Pursue. Pursue. Seek." And yet some of us are still at the lights. We've got nine green lights in front of us and we're still stuck or if we're moving, it's barely. And that's why God also gives us blue lights. Do you know what a blue light means? It means there is something urgent; there's an emergency around us. Maybe we've had that horrible experience of driving along at nighttime, maybe on the back roads of Michigan and suddenly that blue light appears in the rear view mirror. You see, that means pull over and stop, does it not? Well, yes usually it does but what if there's another blue light to your side and another blue light to your side and there are blue lights everywhere and they won't stop behind you and they're pushing you on and pushing you on? Well, what do you do but all these blue lights are saying, "This is urgent! There is an emergency! Keep going faster, faster, faster!" It's like warning, isn't it? And so God gives us multiple blue lights, warning lights, urgent lights to push us on to make sure that we go and seek him with all of our hearts.

What are these blue lights? Well, the first one is this: churchianity is not Christianity. It may be that we think we are a seeker because we simply come to church. That we do Christian things or church things. That's not necessarily seeking the Lord. Just because

we are familiar with the things of God and even familiar with the whole idea of seeking, maybe even able to explain it does not mean that we're actually seeking ourselves. Churchianity is not Christianity. Knowing about seeking is not itself seeking. Don't rest in just being a churchgoer, a church-attender, somebody who knows about these things but really has not experienced them. Don't rest in that. This blue light is saying, "Seek the Lord. Push on. Press on. It's important. This is urgent."

A second blue light is this: not all seeking is real seeking. Not all seeking is real seeking. There are kinds of seeking, even spiritual seeking, that are not the kind of seeking spoken of here that results in finding. There might be somebody saying, "Well, I'm seeking," but you're not prepared to give up a favorite sin, are you? The next words here in verse 7 are, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD." He's saying, "Well, you're not really seeking if you're holding onto a darling sin, a favorite practice that is offensive to God." That's just like a dead weight upon you and God is saying to you, "Don't call this seeking if you're not prepared to drop everything and anything that holds you back." There is half-hearted seeking. Remember that verse in Jeremiah that says, "You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart." So examine your seeking and see this big blue light warning you from the word of God that not all seeking is real seeking.

A third blue light: seeking is not finding. Seeking is not finding. Seeking is not the end. Seeking is not the end in itself. Finding is. Seeking, searching for something is not a particularly pleasant or enjoyable situation to be in, is it? No one likes having to go through small areas with a fine tooth comb and all the time, all the energy, all the effort that's involved. But when you find, well that makes it worthwhile and so it is with this kind of seeking. Don't say, "Well, I'm a seeker." That's not enough. You've got to find. You've got to find the Lord. Don't rest in seeking. Don't think this is sufficient and satisfactory and that one day you'll be able to present this to God, "Well, I was a seeker." No, you've got to be a finder. You've got to put your arms around the Lord by faith and say, "He's mine! I've got him!" or to be more accurate, "He's got me!" Seeking is not finding. Let that flash into your life and push you on.

Fourth blue light: changing is not finding. There are people who can change, who can show an interest in religion, even show an interest in the Bible and things can be amended in their lives. Paul speaks of the Jews who went about to establish their own righteousness. They weren't saved. They maybe had many good things in their life. They turned over many good leaves and they looked much better and cleaner but changing is not necessarily finding. Notice it says, "Seek the Lord." It's not seek morality. Seek a better life. Seek a better reputation. Seek some religion. No, this is, "Seek the Lord." It is to find him in a personal relationship. Don't mistake changing for finding. There are many people out there who can change their lives and many in here maybe too, but is it a finding of the Lord that has put you to it and is empowering it?

The fifth blue light is this: don't make your seeking to be modeled on other seekers, or maybe I could put this more simply, other seekers are not your model. Sometimes there are people who think of a particular kind of seeking and churches have been guilty and

ministers have been guilty of this through the years. Maybe a church decides, well this is the way a sinner finds the Savior and step 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Seven steps. Ten steps. Twelve steps. You can find lots of books called that, "Seven Steps to Christ," "Ten Steps to Christianity." Or maybe a minister might think of his own experience and say, "Well, this is the way everyone should be saved." Or maybe you've got in your own mind somebody that you really respected as a Christian and you think, well, your conversion, your Christianity, your seeking and finding has got to be modeled like that if it's to be real and genuine.

You know, when you look at the Bible, God uses just so many multiplied kinds of means and methods in his seeking that produces so many different kinds of means and methods in sinners seeking. You can go through, you think of Zaccheus. He wasn't like the Centurion, was he? And the Centurion wasn't like the leper. And the leper wasn't like the woman at the well of Samaria. And the woman at the well of Samaria wasn't like the Syrophenician woman. And the Syrophenician woman wasn't like the thief on the cross. I mean, there are just dozens of examples of all the different ways so don't use another model as a stop sign. Indeed, look at the whole picture that Scripture presents us of all the different ways people can be saved and use them to spur you on and say, "Well, my experience is not quite like his or hers or like the minister's or like the church says or like Zaccheus or the Centurion, but they're not my models." God deals with us in different ways suited to our own particular circumstances, characteristics and future usefulness as well and don't let this hinder you. Don't let this hold you back, that you're not conforming to a particular model of seeking.

Sixth blue light: time is not forever. Notice it says here, "while he may be found." Time is limited. Time can be cut short by death. By the Second Coming of Christ. We just don't know when that's going to be, do we? We might be looking for something in the yard and we see dust coming and darkness descending. We know our time is limited but we often aren't given warnings in our lives, though. Time is limited. There is a, "while he may be found." Use this to give you an urgency to flash a big blue light into your life and say, "Get going! This is an emergency! This is urgent! There is nothing more important than this!" Time is not forever.

Also another blue light: God is not always near. Again, there is "while he is near." You know what it's like if you play hide-n-seek children with somebody, if you don't find them straight away or soon, then they've got longer and longer time to get further and further away and to hide themselves better and better. It's also the case in spiritual seeking: the longer we wait to do this, the harder it usually is to find. The further away God gets, the harder it is to locate him. Do it young. Do it now. Don't wait another day where more distance can get between you and the Lord. God is not always near.

Another blue light is: blessings are not the blesser. There are people who can maybe be seeking peace and joy and happiness, contentment, purpose. These are all blessings but they're not the blesser. Notice it says, "Seek the Lord. Seek the blesser."



The last blue light is this: second is not enough. Second is not enough. What do I mean by that? Well, simply the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God." That's the kind of seeking that finds. Second seeking doesn't find. It's seek first, foremost, more than anything and anyone else.

So, friends, you have many green lights saying, "Go," and you have many blue lights coming flashing and saying, "Definitely go. Get going faster, more urgently." So what do you wait for? Why do you stall? You know, there are no red lights when it comes to seeking. There are no amber lights when it comes to seeking. There are only green and blue lights and God sends these lights into our lives to enable the fulfillment of this verse as you have never seen it before. Seek today. If you're seeking, seek until you find. And if you've found, rejoice because it's not really so much that you sought and found but behind that is a gracious and merciful God who has sought and who has found. Amen.

Let's pray.