

The Great Call of the Gospel

Isa 55:6-7 *Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

First thing we noted in Isaiah 55 and the first two verses is that man's need has been met by God. And further that man's real need is met, not just the superficial needs that men feel. God has provided for his thirst and his hunger and both are fully satisfied. *"Let your soul delight itself in abundance."* Then, verses 2 and 3 stressed the importance of man listening to what God offers. *Incline your ear, listen diligently* to Him. And then verses 3 thru 5 speak of the certainty of the promises of God to man. It speaks of the *"sure mercies of David"* and assures us that the promises of God are based on an *"everlasting covenant"* not merely some passing fancy or dwindling hope. Now this morning we hear of the seriousness of the call or the necessity of responding to the call of God toward mankind.

"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon". It is important to note carefully, the result of responding to the call is definite and eternal, but the provision itself is only temporary and will be forever lost to those who do not respond.

The central focal point of this passage is with the word of the Lord. For it tells us that the imagery of the feast is to be understood as hearing the word, and then further reveals that the outcome of hearing the word causes the Word of God itself to be the very the agent in re-creation. As Paul points out in his letter to saints at Rome, *"Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."* Isaiah here is not only telling us that it is a **safe thing** to trust this word he is telling us that it is also **essential** because left to ourselves we will go astray from the Lord's thoughts and ways. Therefore from the passage before us this morning we shall learn that the very heart of the matter is that we must engage in a personal seeking of the Lord. And further we will be instructed in what that seeking of God entails.

The problem all men face is wickedness for Scripture informs us that *"there is none righteous no not one."* Now objectively wickedness has been dealt with by the Servant's death in that *"He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross,"* (Phil 2:8-9) for we know that *in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.* On the other hand our wickedness, subjectively considered, calls for repentance. Since chapter 54 details the objective, God-given benefits of the Servant's work, chapter then 55 answers to its subjectivity in emphasizing the required response which brings those benefits into personal experience.

The call is in 2 parts. 1. We are to seek God, and 1. We are to turn from our sins and return to God. We may refer to them as the two requirements of the call of the Gospel. And there is a 2 part reason given, 1. He is near, and 2. He will have mercy and He will forgive their sins.

I. The call and its requirements.

A. The first requirement of the Gospel is to *"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."*

1. Seeking here is not finding what is lost,

- a. God is not lost; man is lost and needs to seek God.
- b. The Jewish nation in Isaiah's day had left Him for other gods.
- c. Isaiah is calling upon them to seek this God from whom they had wandered away.

2. In the same manner all men have turned away from Him to serve other gods.

- a. Men turned away from God for they had suppressed their knowledge of God in unrighteousness. (Rom 1)
- b. Paul's sermon at Athens was a call to all men now to seek God. (Acts 17:23-
- c. Paul instructed the Gentiles in Athens that God was near to them if only they would seek Him.

3. The idolatry and turning away from God in our day may be more subtle but is still evident.

- a. Seekers of pleasures rather than God
- b. Seekers of thing material - covetousness which is idolatry (Col 3:5)

B. The second requirement is that men are to turn from their evil ways and return to God. - *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts*

1. This was a call to Israel in Isaiah's day for sin and idolatry was rampant in the land.
2. It is now a call to all men and it should be considered a great blessing that has now come to the Gentile world also.

Acts 17:30 " . . . but now commands all men everywhere to repent."

3. The call to repentance is a blessing because the wickedness of man is great. (Roman 3:10-18)
4. It is a blessing because the alternative is to perish. *Repent or perish.* (Luke 13:5)
5. What is too true today is that the church who is to proclaim this Gospel neglects to condemn the sin that damns men's souls.
6. Returning to God requires acknowledgement of one's sin and a turning from that sin.

*1 Jn. 1:9 **If we confess our sins** He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

II. The reason to call upon God in repentance and returning.

A. First we are to do it while He is near. - - *while He may be found, while He is near.*

1. In this gospel age we are told that whoever calls upon the Lord will be saved.

Rom 10:13 For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

2. Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. (Jn 6:37)
3. The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in repentance.

Ps 34:18 The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

B. For God will abundantly pardon. - *let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*

1. This gospel of Isaiah points to Christ and to Him alone.
2. Paul in his message at Antioch having referred to Isaiah 55 then proclaimed Christ as that one of whom Isaiah spoke.

Acts 13:38-39 Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Conclusion: I close with the urgency of coming while He is near.

There is coming a time when God will not be near for men to call upon.

There came a time when the armies of Babylon came and carried them all away.

In Christ day there came that day when Jerusalem was destroyed.

And this shall in time be true of all men for it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment. (Heb. 9:27)

There is no second chance.
There is no hope after death

Paul now as Isaiah did in his day, pleads with mankind not to receive the grace of the gospel in vain.

Cor 6:1-2 We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

The intent of Paul's message is clear.
There will come a time when grace will no longer be available to man

To reject the gospel is to reject all hope.

Heb 2:3 " . . . how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation."