

Sermon for Sunday, December 7, 2025

Isaiah 55:1-13

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable to you Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

One of my tasks this past week was to begin preparing worship services for January and February (the church season of Epiphany.) Beginning on December 28 and continuing through Easter our Scripture readings will be from the gospel of John. Several of these readings have underlying themes having to do with water. Here are some examples:

- John the Baptist and his ministry of baptism in the Jordan culminating in Jesus' baptism
- Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus "being born of water and the Spirit"
- Woman at the Well: a spring of water gushing up to eternal life
- Man who had been ill for 38 years at the Bethzatha Pool
- Man born blind: wash in the pool of Siloam

The OT Scripture readings that we have heard this fall were chosen to prepare us for this gospel. The reading from Isaiah opens with a line inviting all of us to come to the waters. A line that invites us to participate in the abundant life that God is able to provide. This invitation will be clarified as we read John's gospel.

The reading from Isaiah opens with an invitation that explicitly says "everyone." Everyone who is looking to put an end to their longing; everyone desperate to quench the thirst that just never seems to go away; that everyone.

The next verse continues with startling words, "you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"

That hunger that is never satisfied, that thirst that is never quenched; there will be no charge put on your account for the food and drink that your body and soul are longing for. Our bodies and our souls are not looking for physical food and drink. The prophet knows what we are seeking. He recommends that the listener seek the LORD, doing so "while he is near; while he is still easy to find." From the prophet's perspective the hungry and thirsty will find *the*

food and drink they are longing for simply by turning to God; by striving to follow God's way;

We are in the season of Advent: a time of preparation for the arrival of the Christ child. In our culture it's especially easy to think that this season of Advent, this time of preparation, is all about decorating the house, baking cookies, buying and wrapping presents, and eventually gathering with family. There is nothing inherently wrong with these activities but the prophet is clear: these activities are just "busy-ness." These activities divert our attention away from the call of God to repentance; the old fashioned kind: the kind that John the Baptizer issued to the people of Jesus' day. Isaiah points to the deep truth that humans love to spend money on items that will ultimately never satisfy their hunger or thirst.

Isaiah says:

Seek the Lord
Call upon him
Forsake wicked ways
Shun evil thoughts

God is calling us my friends. God is beckoning us to return; to go back to the ways of following God that we know deep inside are the ways that God would have us live and act and speak. The call is to turn toward the LORD our God and acknowledge the sinfulness of our ways. Why should we turn? Because we follow a God who has promised to "abundantly pardon." We follow a God who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Now clarity about a God who will "abundantly pardon" is important. Most of us come to worship to hear this promise from God. We strive to repeat it each week and as such it's easy to take this promise seriously for ourselves. God, the gracious, merciful, and steadfastly loving one, has pardoned each of us. But there is something that we must remember, God, the gracious, merciful, and steadfastly loving one, has also pardoned our neighbor. God, the gracious, merciful, and steadfastly loving one, has also pardoned those who have committed serious crimes. God, the gracious, merciful, and steadfastly loving one, will pardon everyone who comes to the waters.

The prophet reminds us that God is nearly beyond our comprehension when he says: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord." To which I respond "thank goodness!" As we approach Christmas I am so

grateful to have a God who has a far larger vision for creation/humanity than I do. Because my imagination is so very limited I can only imagine that which I have experienced. And that is mostly true for all of us.

After all, who could have ever imagined the long awaited, long promised Messiah would arrive as a newborn lying in a manger in a stable, born to poor peasants. But God could and God did.

Who could have ever imagined that this long awaited Messiah performed most of his ministry in (what is sometimes called) the backwaters of the Roman Empire. But God could and God did.

Who could have ever imagined that this long awaited Messiah was wise enough to confound the religious authorities, compassionate and powerful enough to heal the sick, and brave enough to go to Jerusalem and subject himself to death on a cross without trying to take over political power. But God could and God did.

Yes, God could and God did. God's deep and abiding love for us is almost beyond our comprehension. And God's intentions for the people of this world continue to stir and delight and amaze us.

Ultimately this idea: that God's deep and abiding love for us is so vast; this idea is what gives us hope for the future. God says that "God's word goes out from God's mouth and does not return empty." It accomplishes that which God intends. The ultimate demonstration of God's accomplishment; of the way in which God's word goes out and accomplishes something beyond our imagination occurs in the resurrection of Jesus. And because of the promise that we have been given through God's word, we have the hope/the promise of the resurrection to eternal life.

In conclusion, I encourage you today to heed Isaiah's call to "come to the waters." Come to the waters of life. Come to the waters of abundance. Come to the waters that only God can provide. Come on in; the water's fine! Amen.