

October 14th, 2018
"His Ways are Higher"
Isaiah 55

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Oct 7 Matthew 13-14 Oct 11 Matthew 22-23
Oct 8 Matthew 15-17 Oct 12 Matthew 24-25
Oct 9 Matthew 18-19 Oct 13 Matthew 26
Oct 10 Matthew 20-21 Oct 14 Matthew 27-28

Lesson Introduction: *This week's passage focuses on God's call to the lowly and downtrodden of the world to "seek the LORD while he may be found." As we have seen over the last few weeks, the death and resurrection of Christ was God's plan to save sinners, and through this plan, restoration, peace, and hope for the future are promised for those who belong to Christ. As we study **chapter 55** we will consider how God's call to salvation is a calling that leads from spiritual poverty to wealth in Christ. From there, we will focus on the fact that God's plan for salvation is infinitely greater than anything we can comprehend. Lastly, we will consider how the Lord's word is instrumental in accomplishing His purposes.*

Key Memory Verses: Isaiah 55:8-11

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF THE PASSAGE:

- **The LORD calls on those who are burdened and weak to find strength and rest in Him (V. 1-7).**
- **The LORD's ways are not our ways, but are infinitely wiser (V. 8-9)**
- **The word of the LORD never fails, but always accomplishes its purpose (V. 10-12)**

Isaiah 55 (ESV)

1 "Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

3 Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.

4 Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.

5 Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

6 "Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;

7 let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion
on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from
heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

12 "For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the Lord,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Discussion Section 1: The Call of the LORD to the needy (V. 1-7)

- What does **verse 1** tell us about the nature of salvation?
- How does **verse 2** reveal our nature?
- What do **verses 3 and 6-7** tell us about what is required of those who would be saved?

Note: This passage opens with a strong statement concerning the nature of salvation. We see in **verse 1** that “**everyone who thirsts**” is invited to drink from the waters. The verse goes on to reveal that no wage is required of those who would eat and drink of the LORD’s bounty (indeed that wage has been paid by Christ, as we saw clearly in chapter 53). This verse is a beautiful representation of the way salvation is talked about throughout Scripture. Christ came to save us as lowly sinners, who are worthy of death, and unable to buy or work our way to God (**Romans 6:23, Matthew 11:28-30, Mark 2:17, Romans 8:3**). **Verse 1** shows us that, although we have absolutely nothing to offer, God welcomes us into His feast because of the blood of Christ.

Immediately in **verse 2**, we see that our nature is to try to earn what we cannot earn and be satisfied by that which cannot bring us satisfaction. Who we are apart from the grace of God in Christ, are a people who pursue the passions of the flesh and seek satisfaction from temporal pleasures that will ultimately leave us empty and unsatisfied (**Ephesians 2:1-3, Titus 3:3**). Even our efforts towards redemption are worthless and unable to save us if they are anything more than repentance and faith in Christ alone, and even those efforts are not works of our own doing, but they are gifts from God, worked graciously in us through His Spirit (**2 Timothy 2:25, Titus 3:4-7, Ephesians 2:4-10, Philippians 2:12-13**).

Many people labor in the hopes of doing enough to please God, believing that their works can save them. But our passage today tells us simply to come to the LORD, and delight in His rich food. **Verse 3**, along with **verses 6-7**, make plain that it is only in turning from our wicked ways, and calling upon Christ, throwing ourselves at the mercy and compassion of the Lord, that we will be saved.

Discussion Section 2: Our Ways Compared to God’s Ways (V. 8-9)

- How do **verses 8-9** refer to the preceding verses?

-In what ways do we often question God?

-How might these verses be a comfort in our daily lives?

Note: **Verses 8-9** are foundational in regard to our relationship with God. The verses preceding speak to the incredibly gracious way the LORD brings about salvation, reminding us that we have nothing to offer, yet are welcome to come and eat from the table freely. God’s grace should be astounding to all who have experienced it, and cause for celebration and worship. On the other end of the spectrum are those who are offended by the notion that salvation is not granted based on merits, but God’s grace alone. Many would like to believe that they are worthier than the lowly sinners of this world, and deserve salvation based on what they have done (**Matthew 7:21-23, Luke 15:25-32**). Yet this passage reminds us plainly that the LORD’s ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. We do not get to talk back to God when His way of doing things does not align with our thinking, because we are “**like grasshoppers**” compared to Him, the Creator of all things (**Isaiah 40:22, Romans 9:19-21**). Ultimately, it is a good and glorious thing for us that His ways are so much higher than ours, and that we cannot begin to comprehend Him. Imagine if this world was ultimately governed by people who we could understand fully and think on their level. We would be hopeless. Praise God that He is so much loftier than us!

Discussion Section 3: The Word of the LORD Does not Return Empty (V. 10-11)

-What relation does the “word of the LORD” have to the salvation of His people?

-How does the word of the LORD accomplish His purpose?

Note: As we close out our lesson, consider for a moment how it is that faith is produced in the lives of Christians. Paul wrote, “**So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ**” (**Romans 10:17**). Our passage today affirms with Paul that it is only through the word of God that faith is produced, as well as sustained. Just as the rain and snow bring forth a harvest in due time, the LORD waters the hearts of His people by His word, working to bring about His purpose of salvation, and daily uses it to penetrate our hearts and direct our lives toward Him (**Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**).