

# Isaiah 55

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let me ask you, what's your dream? What is it that you want to be known for? What do you want to achieve?

! Maybe it's career success, to kind of get to the top of the ladder as far as you can. Maybe it's to become financially independent, to be able to own a home in West London, to get to that stage. If you've got that home, all our troubles would go away. And maybe it's to get that job. Where if you've got that job, life would just be so much easier. Maybe it's to get married. If I got married, well, all my troubles would be gone. Maybe it's if we had that child or if we had that other child. Maybe it's to be the perfect family, to be the perfect mum. To be the mum everyone thinks, that's what I want to be like. Maybe it's sporting success. Maybe it's just to be really popular. What's your dream? What are you longing for? What do you thirst for? Johnny Wilkinson was the outside half of the England 2003 World Cup winning team. And there's a documentary out about that at the moment. And Johnny Wilkinson says for 15 years he'd lived to win the World Cup. And you'll know the game against Australia in 2003, he went into kind of overtime. And he dropped the winning goal. And he said that as he turned around, having dropped that winning goal, that was his dream. And for the next, was it I think six minutes, he lived the dream. And he talks about how at that point, the match went into slow motion. And he saw the referee, Andre Watson, pick up his whistle. And he moved the whistle to his mouth. And Johnny Wilkinson said, I wanted to scream, no, no, please don't.

And Andre Watson blew the whistle. And England, very sadly, won the World Cup. But Johnny Wilkinson says, the dream died. The dream died. He'd been longing and thirsting for that moment. He'd got it. And yet he's such a fascinating character, a terrible pundit, but a fascinating character. And that he spent really the last 15 years trying to live with having achieved his dream. And yet the thirst lives on. Hold that thought, alright? Because when you come to Isaiah 55, it's all about what you want. Some commentators suggest that in Isaiah chapter 55, God is like a vendor in a busy market. You've been to those busy markets? And the market holders are seeking to convince passers-by to buy what they've got on offer. And he's persistent. I just want you to see that very early on. Look at verse 1. Come. Four times. Come. Come. Come. And the danger for you, as you think about that illustration, is that you think, this is just one vendor in a busy market of products and ideas. And we pay our money, we take our chances with one of the sellers, with something they've got to offer. And it will make a difference to our lives. And I hope that what we're going to see this morning when we look at Isaiah 55 is it's not just some kind of sales pitch. Isaiah 55 is an invitation. And it's an invitation which is beyond anything you've ever had. Because verse 1, it will cost you no money.

And God promises he will satisfy your ultimate thirst. By what will cost you no money. And God will satisfy your ultimate thirst.

[ 4 : 06 ] And so we're going to think about this invitation, the true object of our thirst, the way to quench our thirst, and then the future satisfaction of our thirst. So first of all, look with me at the object of our thirst. The object of our thirst. Look at verse 1. Come, everyone who thirsts. Come to the waters. Come, and he who has no money, come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Come, all of you who are thirsty. And right away you've got a choice to make this morning. You can either admit to yourself that you are thirsty, or you can deny that you're thirsty. And the thirst that is talking about is the thirst for desire. And for meaning. And for significance. It's a thirst for love. It's a thirst for redemption. And whether you recognise it or not, it's a thirst that every single one of us here this morning is trying to quench in one way or another. And so I'm guessing that most people, the majority of our people in our culture, they still hold out somehow, don't they? Do you remember Christmas? That somehow the gifts that we get at Christmas will somehow quench our thirst. We all think that, no matter how old. If I get that, I'll be

satisfied.

It's irrational. And we know it's irrational. It's never worked in previous years. But somehow we think, if only I can get that gift, or I get such and such, it will be different.

Once we realise that Christmas gifts don't really do it, we move on to other things. Fame. Fortune. Popularity. Many people think they are the means, don't they, to a happy life.

And then we hear words like these from the comic actor Jim Carrey who said, I wish everyone could get rich and famous. And everything they ever dreamed of. So that they could see it's not the answer. And then there are other things, aren't there? We fall in love and we get married. When we finally break into our chosen field. When we get that job. When our children achieve great things. When we finally are able to buy our own home.

And we think that all those things will finally satisfy. And when we discover that whatever it is we're longing for. No lover or career or achievement or possession. Even the best possible ones can ever satisfy. They never do. The satisfaction escapes. It fades away, doesn't it? As we close our fingers around our goal. Nothing, nothing ever delivers the joy it promises.

[ 7 : 02 ] Just think about that. Is there anything in your life that has succeeded or ever come close to meeting your dreams or expectations?

I get to meet anyone who says yes to that question. But God is saying there is an answer to your thirst. There is something that will truly satisfy. Look at verse 2.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread? And you labour for that which does not satisfy. Listen diligent to me and eat what is good and delight yourself in rich food.

You incline your ear to me and come to me here that your soul may live. And God says to you this morning you keep working for, you keep spending your money on things that promise you the world but they constantly fail. You invest yourself in idols.

And he's saying why would you trust your life to those lifeless idols? He says there is an answer to this thirst.

[ 8 : 12 ] But these idols they will fail you. That's been the message, hasn't it? Of this section in Isaiah from chapter 40 to chapter 55. And Isaiah has been relentless in pointing out the sheer emptiness of life.

Of life without God. Of life devoted to things that won't last. Of the nothingness of idols. And he's saying why would you trust your life?

But he says there is an answer. And it's not those things. He says come to the water. There's good food. In fact there's the richest affair.

There's a banquet that he's already told us about in Isaiah chapter 25. A banquet of the best meats and of the finest wines. What are all those food and drink images pointing you to?

God spells it out in verse 3 doesn't he? Where he says I'm inviting you to come to me. To me. To me. He is the one who alone can quench that thirst.

[ 9 : 20 ] He is the one alone who can satisfy your hunger. He is the only one who can meet your need for significance. And your need for meaning and hunger and love and redemption.

Listen to how C.S. Lewis suggests. As I've pointed to you this before. Our human experience should validate what Isaiah is telling us here. Lewis writes. The Christian says creatures. Human beings are not born with desires.

Unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger. So there's such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim. Well there's such a thing as water.

Men feel sexual desire. Well there's such a thing as sex. And if I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy. The most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy. That doesn't mean that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy.

[ 10 : 24 ] But only to arouse it. To suggest the real thing. And God says to you through Isaiah 55. I am the real thing. God says to you.

I am the true object of your thirst. I am the one who can satisfy. The psalmist says of God.

At my right hand there are pleasures forevermore. So how do we quench that thirst? Isaiah tells us the first step to quenching that thirst.

That we feel is to come to the Lord. And specifically he says first of all listen. Can you see that? Look at this through again. Listen. Listen diligently to me.

And eat what is good. And delight yourself in rich food. Incline you. Bend your ear. And come to me. Hear that your soul may live. Can you say well what are we to listen to?

[11:23] Verse 6. We are to listen to this. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way.

And the unrighteous woman his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. That he may have compassion on him. And to our God. For he will abundantly pardon. And so here is what God says you must pay attention to this morning.

If your thirst will be satisfied. And can you just look at the verbs. Seek. Call. Forsake. Turn.

Seek. Call. Forsake. And turn. And as you read those words. It almost sounds as if the quenching of our thirst is really up to us.

We are to seek and call. And forsake and turn. And if we do that well. Well enough God will satisfy the thirst. But look again how he opened the chapter. Look at verse 1.

[12:25] 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.

And that is puzzling isn't it? Why is that so puzzling? Why is verse 1 so odd? What's he talking about? How can you buy and eat when you have no money?

How do you buy wine and milk without money and without coffee? Cost. And here's the point that's brilliantly expressed by Isaiah. That this is a purchase that is somehow free to the purchaser.

But in verse 1. It is free. But you somehow still have to buy it. And Isaiah's point is not that this is a soup kitchen.

It's not a soup kitchen even if the customers are beggars. There is a purchase and there is a price to quench the thirst and to satisfy the hunger. It's just that it's not ours.

[13:32] It's not ours to pay. That it's already been paid for. It's already been paid for. How has it already been paid for? Well because of Isaiah 53.

Because of the suffering servant on the cross. Because Jesus paid the cost himself. He paid the price for the feast in full.

Isaiah 55 is building on Isaiah 53. That famous chapter. That prophesies the death of the suffering servant of God.

The Messiah. That Jesus pays the price in full on our behalf. He paid the price so that we can buy what costs us nothing.

So in a sense verses 6 to 7. Spell out what does it mean for you and I to buy without money. And specifically it's showing us the quenching of our thirst.

[14:33] Is dependent on you and I coming to this amazingly gracious God. To receive pardon for our wickedness. And so what does God call on us to do? Look at verse 7. Let the wicked forsake.

Let the wicked give up his way. Let the wicked run away from his ways. And the unrighteous man his thoughts. And then return to the Lord. That he may have compassion on him.

And to our God. For he will abundantly pardon. To become a Christian. To become someone who knows God. As his heavenly father.

To become someone who knows that they're forgiven. Involves a complete shift in thinking. And living. It's a 180% turnaround.

That God issues a challenge to the mind. He says doesn't he. Give up your wrong thoughts about God. Give up your wrong thoughts.

[15:33] Why? Verse 8. For my thoughts. Are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways my ways. Declares the Lord.

That before you and I become Christians. We automatically. Underestimate God's holiness. And God's purity. And we overestimate.

Our own goodness. Every single one of us did it. If we believed in God. We didn't realise really what God was like. Maybe we believed in a God who watches over the world.

And who created it from a distance. But he's not really involved in your life and my life. And he's not there unless you need to call on him. To sort out a big problem. We had very little sense of his dazzling pure holiness.

And his absolute hatred of sin. And so we underestimate what God is like. We underestimate his holiness. Because we want to bring him down to where. Well it's more manageable.

[16:42] And yet we overestimate our own goodness. So we're willing to admit aren't we? We were willing to admit. We're not perfect. Because no one is. But at the back of our minds. We think

well I've got my good points.

And they outweigh my bad points. And overall God must be pretty pleased to have me around. I'm much better than others. But God says. First eight.

My thoughts are not your thoughts. And you are this morning. As I am. Far more sinful. Than I ever imagined.

God says. I am stunningly holy. I am stunningly perfect.

And you are miserably sinful. Like I am. And that is why Jesus had to die for sinners. To bridge the gap. To rescue you and I from judgment. But he says.

[17:39] That it's not the only way. My thoughts are not your thoughts. He says. You may be more sinful than you ever imagined. But you are more loved. Than you ever dreamt. You are far more loved.

You are far more loved. God says. I am the God of steadfast love. I am the God of unbelievable love. And compassion. And mercy.

And pardon. Pardon. And that is why Jesus had to die for sinners. But it's why Jesus was glad to die for sinners. Because of his love for us.

Look at the last part of verse seven. Then in return to the Lord. For he will have compassion upon him. And to our God. For he will abundantly pardon. God will abundantly pardon.

He will multiply pardon. It's as though it's pardon with compound interest. He is so holy. Yes. But he is so forgiving. And Isaiah is saying.

[18:39] If you've tasted this forgiveness in any way. If you've tasted of his mercy. There is so much more of that.

Where you found it the first time. So becoming a Christian. Involves doesn't it. Giving up your wrong thoughts about God. And it means that you.

You no longer get to define your God. He is not a DIY God. The God of the Bible. It is the God who is revealed to you.

In the pages of his word. And that God is far more holy. And far more loving than you ever imagined. But notice.

That Isaiah in that same verse tells us. That becoming a Christian. Doesn't just mean giving up your wrong thoughts. Does it? But also our wrong ways. For my ways.

[19:40] My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways. My ways. Declares the Lord. God. So the repentance. What we call that. Turn around.

Is not just a change of mind. But a change of will. It changes our habits. And our plans. And so here is the great challenge to you and I.

Here is the challenge. That God is not interested. In being an extracurricular activity in your life.

God is not interested in being an add-on.

God is not interested in being an accessory to your life. He wants you all. And so God wants to be at the centre of everything in your life.

He wants to be at the centre of every decision that you make. And every activity that you do. And every relationship that you are in. And God wants to be at the centre of every conversation that you have.

[20:42] And I think that takes intentional thought. Doesn't it? As we see to live this out. That day by day. As Christians. Is we are to orientate ourselves around God.

And not the other way round. To intentionally serve other people. And love them well. To intentionally think about our neighbours and our friends.

Who we might invite to church. To intentionally think. How am I going to encourage faith in my family? My spouse. My children.

My parents. How am I going to live today in a way where I do things God's way? And I think thoughts. God's way.

To think who are my friends and neighbours? Can I extend this Isaiah 55 invitation to? Come all you who are thirsty. Come you who have no money. Come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

[21:49] God's ways are not our ways. And yet he invites us to live his way. It's nothing short is it of revolution. Of revolution in your life.

To bring glory to God in a no holds barred, sold out commitment to God. And so God says give up your wrong thoughts.

And give up your wrong ways. Think God's thoughts. Act in God's ways. And so Isaiah says here is this white hot holy over the top loving God.

Seek him. That's the bottom line. Seek the Lord not in the sense that something is lost. Okay. But look with diligence.

That's the meaning of the word here. Commit yourself with determination and persistence and longing. To look to the Lord's presence.

[ 22 : 54 ] And his fellowship. And Isaiah says if I were you I wouldn't delay. Don't forget on at verse 6. Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he is near. And so can I speak to you as clearly as I can. If you are someone here. And you know that you've not put your trust in Jesus Christ.

You're not relying on him. You're not thinking his thoughts and walking his ways. You might be religious. You might like coming to church.

And it is so, so easy. To come to church and go out of church. And think that there is no urgency to this. It's so easy for you to think.

I can check in with God. Whenever I want. So to say. I am interested in God. But there's no great hurry. And I'm not going to worry about these things for the moment.

[ 24 : 03 ] It's a real danger isn't it. For children and young people to think. All that kind of God stuff. I'll do it when I'm older. And God seems a bit distant to me.

And I'm very far away. And so God says to you this morning. Actually there isn't a lot of time. And I'm not far away.

I'm right here. God is not like the cash machine. On Greenford Avenue. The cash machine on Greenford Avenue is always there.

When I need it. 24 hours. God is not like a machine that I can just drop in on. When I want to. He is a person.

And you can't get to know a person. By punching in numbers. People have to reveal themselves to you. So let me suggest to you.

[ 25 : 03 ] The fact that you are in church this morning. And here today. Is perhaps maybe for the first time. You sense a thirst. Which has not been satisfied. And in your life.

There are signs that God is at work at life. Right now. In your life right now. And he is inviting you. Come. Come. He's calling you now.

And it would be the height of sin. And of foolishness. And wickedness. For you to say this morning. God don't call me. I'll call you.

It is a wicked thing. To say no to God. Because God doesn't work. Like that. If God is calling. The time to respond is now.

If he's calling. The time to respond. Isaiah says is now. Seek him. Change him. Call on him now. Change him. So Isaiah says.

[ 26 : 09 ] God is the object of your thirst. And whatever it is. You've been running after. God is the one. Who you're really longing for. Repentance is the way to quench that thirst. Turn to his ways and his thoughts.

The thoughts. And thirdly. Isaiah shows us the future. He shows us the future. In this passage. And he says. The future for those people.

Who have come to God. His full satisfaction of our thirst. That lies before us. And that comes in the final verses of the chapter. But it's linked with what we skipped over in verses 3 to 5.

Can you see that verse 3? Incline your ear to me. Come to me. Ensure that your soul may live. And I will make with you an everlasting covenant. My steadfast sure love for David.

Of King David. Behold I made him a witness to the peoples. And a leader and a commander for the peoples. Behold you shall call a nation that you do not know. And a nation that you did not know shall run to you. Because of the Lord your God and the Holy One of Israel.

[ 27 : 11 ] For he has glorified you. And then the trickiest verses in the chapter. But it seems at the most basic level. It is promising that those who come to God.

Those who listen to God. That he will make an everlasting covenant. That he will make an everlasting pledge. Or bond or promise or agreement with us. And that will be in fulfillment to the promises he made to King David.

And it is a covenant. It is a promise that God will extend to the nations for all time. And if we are in any doubt as to why this covenant is everlasting and secure.

We are given an explanation of it in the New Testament. And the sermon by Paul in Acts chapter 13. Where he quotes Isaiah chapter 55. If you can look at it. Acts chapter 13.

And verse 32 to 34. Paul is preaching to his audience. And this is what he says. Acts chapter 15 verse 32. Acts 13 sorry verse 32.

[ 28 : 14 ] And Paul says. We bring you the good news. That what God promised to the fathers. This he's fulfilled to us their children.

By raising Jesus. As also it is written in the second psalm. You are my son. And today I've begotten you. And as for the fact that he raised Jesus from the dead. No more to return to corruption.

He's spoken in this way. I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David. That last part is a quote from Isaiah 55. And he's saying this my promise is an everlasting eternal promise.

Because it's been guaranteed by an event in the past. God's promise is guaranteed by the death and resurrection of his son Jesus. It's been guaranteed by the one who comes to you and says. Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst again. It's guaranteed by the one who said. I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry.

[ 29 : 19 ] And he who comes to me will never go thirsty. Jesus is the one who has secured the everlasting covenant. For all those who will trust their lives to him.

Here's the beautiful thing here. When God makes covenants. When he makes promises to his people. Throughout the Old Testament. More often than not there is a sign to confirm the covenant. So you remember the covenant with no other sign.

There was the rainbow. They saw the sign. They remembered the covenant. For Abraham it was circumcision. For Moses and Sinai it was the sprinkled blood. And Isaiah says there is a sign for this everlasting covenant.

And appropriately it's an everlasting sign. Verses 12 and 13. For you will go out with joy. And you will be led forth in peace.

And the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing. And the trees of the field. They'll clap their hands. And instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree. And instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle.

[ 30 : 28 ] And it shall make a name for the Lord. An everlasting sign. That shall not be cut off. What is this everlasting sign? It is nothing less than a transformed people.

In a transformed world. Which will point to who and what the Lord is. And this is the fulfilment of God's great plan.

God's purposes. It's where history is heading. That repentance leads to a new reality. That as you and I come and turn and hear and forsake.

To the one who is the true object of our thirst. We are transformed. And so we receive new emotions.

New emotional life such as joy. And we enter into new relationships. And expectations which are expressed here as peace. And we are under new ownership.

[ 31 : 32 ] And new care. And that is why we are led forth. And Isaiah says this personal transformation. Which begins now. Which many in this room are beginning to experience.

One day will be brought to completion. And one day there will be a new environment. And a new earth will be released from its bondage to decay.

Romans 8. And corruption and curse. And it will share in the freedom and the liberty of those who belong to God. And that's the significance isn't it. Of the disappearance of the thorn bush and the briars.

It symbolises the removal of the curse. That has entered the world. As a result of sin. We'll sing in a minute.

Joy to the world. The Lord has come. No more let sins or sorrows grow. Nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow.

[ 32 : 38 ] Far as the curse is found. One day God will take the curse away. And it's part of the sign of this everlasting covenant.

That the curse will be removed. And creation will explode in fresh joy and praise. Inanimate creation.

Trees will clap their hands. Mountains will sin. And this will be the main focus of the rest of the book of Isaiah that we'll see in coming weeks.

This is the final outcome of the work of the servant. This is the outcome of his defeat of sin and death. But yes on a cosmic level.

Not just in your little life. But through his death and resurrection. It is nothing less than the full realisation. Of all that God has promised from the beginning.

[ 33 : 38 ] And that is what your future looks like if you've come to God. If you trust in Jesus. All the promises of God find their yes.

In Jesus. So that in him we find final full satisfaction. Of our thirst.

In him we find a place in which we look forward to. Where there will be a whole new environment. And so here in Jesus is the only place.

That can truly make the claim to be the happiest place on earth. You become the perfect family. You get the perfect job.

You get the perfect wife. You become the perfect man. It will not satisfy. It will not satisfy.

[ 34 : 43 ] Jeremiah chapter 2. And talks about. That their people have committed two sins. His people have committed two sins. That one that they've forsaken the living water.

They've stopped finding their satisfaction in God. And they've gone to broken systems of water. Broken systems that don't work. That don't satisfy. As Christians we do that.

Don't we? We know. Don't we? That true satisfaction. Actually we know. Can only be found in God. True security can only be found in God. True worth can only be found in Christ.

And yet we think. If only I get this. If only I achieve this. If only I do that. I'll find satisfaction. But it is in Christ.

And Christ's new heavens and new earth. That you and I will truly be satisfied. Malcolm Muggeridge was an author. And a journalist. And a media personality.

[ 35 : 42 ] Through much of the 20th century. And he wrote this. He says. I may. I suppose. Regard myself. Or pass. For being a relatively successful man. People occasionally stare at me in the street.

That's fame. I can fairly easily earn enough. To qualify for admission. To the highest slopes. Of the internal revenue. That's success. Furnished with money.

And a little fame. Even the elderly. If they may care. To partake of trendy diversions. That's pleasure. It might happen once in a while. But something I said. Or wrote.

Was sufficiently heeded. For me to persuade myself. That it represented. A serious impact. On our time. That's. Fulfillment. Yet.

I say to you. And I beg you. To believe me. Multiply these tiny triumphs. By a million. Add them all together. And they are nothing less.

[ 36 : 40 ] Than a positive impediment. Against that one draft. Of living water. Christ offers. To the spiritually thirsty. Irrespective of who or what they are.

Here is God's extravagance. And staggering invitation. To every single one of you. He says come to me.

Come to me. Buy from me. Or it will cost you no money. Because Christ has paid it all.

And I will satisfy your ultimate thirst. That's great.