

Pentecost 11

August 20, 2017

Isaiah 55:1-5

God's Invitation of Pure Grace to His Everlasting Covenant

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Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Savior,

Last week, my wife and I hosted some friends for a cook-out. Prior to this we went to the store and bought everything we needed. When we went to Meijer, we took our Meijer card because those things were not without a cost for us. We did not want our guests to bring anything. We did not expect our guests to share the cost.

The prophet Isaiah speaking for the LORD about eight centuries before Christ's birth describes quite a different marketplace. You don't need money there because the food and drink are without cost. Our theme could have been God's invitation of pure grace to the marketplace where everything is free.

This marketplace with its free food and drink to enjoy is the LORD's "everlasting covenant with you." The LORD says, "Listen, listen to me. I will make an everlasting covenant with you." Before us is **God's Invitation of Pure Grace to His Everlasting Covenant.** It alone satisfies our souls. God promised his faithful love to David.

The LORD speaks through Isaiah's mouth and pen. He calls to his hearers' minds the town marketplace lined with shops and booths. Our present day farmers' markets are a simple example. Those ancient markets, some still around in the Middle East, sell jars of wine, and milk. Loaves of freshly baked bread cover the tables. Normally, one must purchase these items to eat and to drink so they nourish and sustain the body.

The LORD's marketplace is not only different, it is unique. You can "buy" the things here, take them home, without money because there is no cost to you. These things are the spiritual food and drink the LORD had for Israel and has for us. They are the same. The spiritual food and drink is the LORD's covenant of pure grace in Jesus Christ. It is from everlasting to everlasting.

We see in Isaiah chapter 53 what the milk, wine and bread are with these words, "*I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils among the strong, because he poured out his life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors.*" (12,13)

We find them also in chapter 54, "*Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you.*"

The food is good and it is free. It is satisfying for those dying of thirst in the parched state of the knowledge of sins and their condemnation. This food satisfies the poor who have nothing to offer to pay for their sins as if you even could pay for them. If you are satisfied and in your own righteousness, you will not care about this good food and drink. If you think you can pay for this food and drink with the currency of your own works or efforts you will not enjoy them.

If you are thirsty for the righteousness of Christ that saves, "*Come... come... come... buy.*" Come and drink the living water of God's fulfilled promises in Christ. If you are poor in spirit,

come with empty hands and buy without cost the milk and wine and bread of God's unfailing love in his covenant of peace.

"Why spend money on what is not bread and you labor on what does not satisfy?" The spiritual food God gives is all good and free. God's invitation of pure grace to his everlasting covenant is yours. How foolish to spend our time and effort on things that are not for our everlasting banquet with Christ. Christ is the living bread that is the staff of our eternal life. What a waste of time to store up things for this life, to concentrate our hours and energy on those things we must leave behind at death and we know do not really satisfy our spirits were we honest.

Instead we look to the marketplace for that food that is good and free. We look to God's promise fulfilled in Christ. It alone satisfies our souls. God promised his faithful love to David.

The LORD invites us, urges us, *"Hear me, that your soul may live."* What we hear is the LORD say. *"I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David."* God had promised David that the Savior would come from his family. That Savior would sit on David's throne forever and ever. That same covenant or promise of grace was also for Israel even as they were about to suffer God's chastening hand against their idolatry. Such rich fare would delight the soul.

The LORD goes on to show that King David was a type of that coming Savior. The LORD had made David a witness to the everlasting covenant. David shared it with God's people. David was a leader and a commander. Jesus Christ is the perfect Prophet and perfect King who shares God's Word through the Scripture, and rules our hearts through the gospel, and rules the universe with his power.

The people under David had enjoyed the rich fare that delighted their souls, the promised Prophet and King was coming. Their faith in his coming is what forgave their sins. For us, the Prophet and King has come. Our faith in his coming forgives ours. The rich fare of Jesus' cross and resurrection, his ascension and rule at the Father's right hand, his promise to come for us to take us home delights the soul.

We dine on this everlasting banquet of good and free food in response to God's call of grace as we hold those blessings in the hand of faith. We receive them in Christ's true body and blood in the sacrament. The everlasting covenant given to David and passed along from generation to generation has come to us.

It has come in fulfillment of the promise the LORD makes to that Savior. Through Isaiah, the LORD speaks to Jesus his eternal Son to come into the flesh, *"Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will come to you, because of the LORD your God, the holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor."*

The LORD is speaking about the difference between Israel and the nations, the Gentiles. God had revealed himself to his people only. In the future, in the New Testament Church, the Spirit would extend that knowledge to the world. That is why we have heard it. The Father endowed his eternal Son with splendor that Jesus shined out in his miracles, and especially in his sacrifice on the cross and resurrection from the dead.

As the Savior's splendor shines out through us, nations come to him, people hasten to Jesus. This coming in answer to God's gracious invitation to the eternal banquet is not because of us but *"because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel."* They do not come because of our splendor but because of the Savior's splendid grace and mercy.

The LORD has revealed food and drink without cost. It is good food that delights the soul. Give up your efforts on what is not bread. End your labors on what does not satisfy. The LORD invites you all to come, buy and eat. Give ear and come to him. Hear him that your soul may live. Amen. <SDG>