

“Come, Everyone Who is Thirsty!”

Thomas Robinson, *God of Life & Light for the World* 6. November 4, 2018

Isaiah 55:1-13

God calls people to a nourishing world of grace.

¹ Hello, everyone who is thirsty, come for water;
and whoever has no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk, for no money and no cost.

² Why spend money for something that's not bread,
and toil away for things that don't satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat something good!
Delight yourselves in rich food!

³ Lean in to hear, and come close to me;
listen, that your very life may come alive.

God's covenant love reaches from David to the World.

I'm going to make a covenant for the ages with you,
my loving promises to David, now confirmed.

⁴ Look! I set him forth as testimony to peoples,
a leader and director of peoples.

⁵ Look! Foreign people that you don't know, you will invite,
and foreign people who don't know you will come
running to you,
so as to reach Yahweh your God, Israel's Holy One,
for he has made you beautiful.

God's ways are gracious beyond our comprehension.

⁶ Seek Yahweh while he opens himself to be found;
call out to him while he is close to you.

⁷ Let those who do evil forsake their way,
and people who create trouble, their schemes.

Let them turn back to Yahweh,

and he will show compassion to them;
turn to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my ways of thought are not your ways of thought,
nor are your paths my paths, declares Yahweh.

⁹ For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so are my paths high above your paths
and my ways of thought above your ways of thought.

God will still bring his delight in new life to his world.

¹⁰ For as the rain and snow fall from heaven
and don't return there until they water the earth,
and make it bear offspring and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to all who eat,

¹¹ so will my word be, as it goes forth from my mouth.
It will not return to me without effect,
but will rather accomplish that in which I delight,
and succeed in what I sent it to do.

God's people share in a story uniting all creation in joy.

¹² For you will go forth in joy
and be led forth in peace/shalom;
the mountains and the hills ahead of you
will break out in celebration,
and all the trees in the countryside clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of thorn bushes, cypress will grow;
instead of stinging nettles, the flowering myrtle.

And this will represent the name of Yahweh,
a sign for the ages that will not fail.

John 4:13-14 (in Samaria); 7:37-41 (in Jerusalem)

¹³ Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “All who drink this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but those who drink of the water I will give them will never be thirsty forever. The water that I'll give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

³⁷ On the last ... day of the feast [of Tabernacles], Jesus stood up and shouted, “If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me and drink.” ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, from within them will flow rivers of living water.”

³⁹ But he said this concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were going to receive, for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus hadn't yet been glorified. ⁴⁰ When some from the crowd heard these words they said, “This really is ‘the Prophet!’” [Deut 18:15-18] ⁴¹ Others were saying, “He is the Messiah!”

Isaiah 44:1, 3-5a Cf. Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:16-18

¹ Hear, Jacob my servant, Israel whom I have chosen, ... ³ For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. ⁴ They shall spring up ... like willows by flowing streams. ⁵ They will say, “I belong to the LORD.”

Isaiah 25:6-8 Cf. Revelation 21:3-7

⁶ On this mountain, Yahweh of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain ... the shroud that is cast over all peoples....
⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and my Lord Yahweh will wipe the tears from all faces!

Isaiah 61:1-3 Cf. Luke 4:16-21

¹ The Spirit of my Lord Yahweh is upon me, because Yahweh has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the year of the Yahweh's favor, and the day of recompense of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion ... a covering of beauty instead of ashes, ... gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the garden of Yahweh, that he may be glorified.

True Grace, Costly Grace

This text concludes Isaiah of the Exile, 40-55, in a playful, powerful way. A water-seller's cry! But no sale, no cost. Wine, milk, bread provided free! The people have so missed real life that they labor to eat the dust and tree bark of their self-made powers. If they could listen to another story, God's story, everything would be gourmet! Their broken life could become really alive.

Behind this lies a complex story of brokenness and exile. God's promise of renewal seen through God's self-giving love embodied in the Suffering Servant. God is king renewing through a servant.

If people are going to really hear this, they must listen carefully, to grasp a new kind of Grace!

We're sure there must be a catch: God is wanting to snatch life away, fill us with guilt. True, we are guilty, but God's aim is to share the living water, rich food of his own life with his creatures.

Israel's Covenant & Story Extended to All People

Isaiah stresses that the God Israel knows is the only God. All other gods are human constructions.

But the only God must be the God of all the world, all nations and peoples, even Persians, etc.

God's promises extend out from Israel/David to all. A strange dance of new knowledge will come.

Israel will impact peoples they don't know and those strangers will run to a God of such grace.

A Greatness so Vast, We Struggle to See It

In a final exhortation Isaiah calls Israel to return to God. God longs to give compassion and pardon.

We continue to wallow in our evils and trouble, corrupting our lives, limiting our vision. We can recognize a greatness like our little broken selves, control of each other, our fear and violence.

Our religions prefer gods of human achievement, guilt, shame, punishment, human-size kings.

But God's greatness is so incomprehensible we can hardly recognize it as great – "not our ways!"

A God who takes the suffering and sin we and all other humans cause, who bears it and gives life in exchange! We feed ourselves on dust and death while he brings free water and a banquet.

Can it be real? Surely not. We've got to be our own masters. Such gracious love, can I believe?

Jesus shows that God as King - Messiah - Son of Man and as Suffering Servant belong together!

A Work God Alone Does, so We won't Be Alone

Through Isaiah, God emphasizes that his unfolding work of grace doesn't depend on our approval or understanding. His Word goes out into his world, like water on earth. It will ultimately accomplish God's Delight! Humans don't have a vote in whether God is God. Our choice is for ourselves, whether we share in that Delight of Grace, in our life coming alive, in the banquet.

The Event is played out in small stories, Jews returning to Jerusalem, Jesus living the Suffering Servant, offering Water of life. Jews & people across the world, experiencing God's amazing Grace.

The whole universe joins in. Trees clap their hands! God delights in all his people, an eternal sign!