

This will be our last Sunday on the prophets and the Old Testament lessons. It has been quite a journey through the Old Testament this Fall. We looked at stories from Genesis like Jacob and Esau and explored Shadrack, Meshack and Abednego. Next week we will start our journey through the Gospel of John. If I am really good, I might even have new devotionals ready for you next week. So, today, we look at a very meaningful text, Isaiah chapter 55. Most scholars believe this was written after the Jewish nation returned from Exile. When they arrived back in the Promised Land it was a very bleak place. It probably looked something like this:

### **Picture of Rock Point**

So there isn't a lot of food, resources or much of anything really. If you want to know how they felt, let's all sell our homes and move to Rock Point, AZ. This is where the picture was taken. We have a Lutheran mission there doing outreach to the Navajo's. I have been there. There is no jobs. It is cold, flat, and has only one gas station which is also the only store. You do not have to go to Africa to see people in poverty. Just head to Rock point. So if we all moved there no doubt we would be one sorrowful bunch. Plus you would be stringing up your pastor, but that is another story. The point being, the people have returned to a very bleak land in Isaiah. Yet, hope is not lost. God has a plan. Sometimes the scripture for a Sunday lends itself to simply walking through what was read that morning. This is a good one to do so. We read in 55:1

**“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat”**

See this answers a very important question of what did people do for fun in the Old Testament? They Garden. . It says it right here, Ho. Now this verse just implies symbolically that the people are hungry, but don't worry, God has something good in mind. The rest of the chapter talks about God's love for God's people.

We read in 55:3

**“Incline your ear, and come to me, listen so that you may live”**

### **Repairman PICTURE**

Wanda's dishwasher quit working so she called a repairman. Since she had to go to work the next day, she told the repairman, "I'll leave the key under the mat. Fix the dishwasher, leave the bill on the counter, and I'll mail you a check ."

"Oh, by the way don't worry about my bulldog Spike. He won't bother you. But, whatever you do, d o NOT, under ANY circumstances, talk to my parrot!" "I REPEAT, DO NOT TALK TO MY PARROT!!!"

When the repairman arrived at Wanda's apartment the following day, he discovered the biggest, meanest looking bulldog he has ever seen. But, just as she had said, the dog just lay there on the carpet watching the repairman go about his work.

The parrot, however, drove him nuts the whole time with his incessant yelling, cursing and name calling. Finally the repairman couldn't contain himself any longer and yelled, "Shut up, you stupid, ugly bird!" To which the parrot replied, "Get him, Spike!"  
See - Men just don't listen

What Isaiah 55 is all about is comfort for the soul. In order to be comforted, we need to be open ourselves to that comfort. Incline your ear and come to me. We all have our listening challenges and I might add, it affects both men and women. Recall the words of Jesus, whoever has ears let them hear. We get from God what we expect from God. So if we come into worship expecting, hoping, and wanting God to speak to us in some way this morning, more often than not, God will. But if we are preoccupied with all sorts of stuff on our to-do list than chances are we will miss out on the comfort that God wants to give to us. It begins with us opening our ears and souls.

This means we have to be very intentional about focusing our attention on God. We might do that by focusing on the words of a hymn, taking time to pray and be quiet but mostly just for us to be open to God's presence. So you see it is just not a matter of opening our ears, the next step is for us to do the following found in Isaiah 55:6

**“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near”**

### **Picture of Nativity Scene**

One of the coolest things about Christmas is this, God comes to us! If we believe that the Spirit is at work in the world, then there is little concern that God is absent. God may feel absent. Yet it is during those times of doubt and despair that we often encounter our God. We recognize that God is here where two or three are gathered. We especially trust that Jesus is present during Holy Communion. It is one of many reasons we do it every Sunday. God is present with us. Celebrate in that presence. Seek God, pray and trust that the Lord is here.

So while we open our ears and seek the Lord, God also has a part to play. For you see, we have a God who acts. We have a God who is coming to change the world. We have a God of love and that God who acts will love the world back to God. So we read the following in verse 55:11

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

So shall my word that goes out from my mouth. In the Bible God's word implies action. When God speaks things are put into motion.

### **Earth Picture**

The first time God speaks, the world is created. And God said, let there be light. God speaks through the promises of God in the covenant's we already mentioned. God speaks through the prophets giving direction and guidance. This is the power of the spoken word. Yet The word doesn't end there. Next week in John we will look at the power of the Living Word. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the Word was God.

Recall the powerful witness of the centurion with the sick servant. We read the following in Luke 7:6-9

**<sup>6</sup>And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, 'Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; <sup>7</sup>therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. <sup>8</sup>For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, "Go", and he goes, and to another, "Come", and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this", and the slave does it.' <sup>9</sup>When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.'**

So Jesus speaks and the servant is healed. Jesus said many things. The Living Word through the Spoken word promises us forgiveness, grace, peace and heaven. Is there anything else we really need?

When we open our ears. When we seek the Lord. When we watch God work in the world through God's Word, capital W. We become changed people. We find not happiness but Joy. We replace anxiety and fears with peace. Even nature joins along with us. So I close with these very encouraging words from Isaiah 55:12. Read these with me!

**For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.**