

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

www.twojourneys.org

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at twojourneys.org

Seek the Lord While He May Be Found!

Isaiah 55:6-9

Last week... the most glorious invitation in history!!

Isaiah 55:1-3 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ² Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. ³ Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.

This incredible invitation is from Almighty God! An invitation to sit with Him at an eternal banqueting table and drink water that we may live eternally, and milk, that we may be richly nourished; and wine, that we may be filled with joy and all the fullness of life.

God reasons with us, pleading with us to accept His invitation! He calls to poor people, who have no money... and to rich people who are wasting their money and efforts on what does not satisfy.

He pleads with us to listen to Him and to eat and to drink what is good and be delighted in the fatness of what is best in all the universe

He pleads with us to listen that our souls may live!

The eternal banquet is Christ!! We are invited in under a covenant God has made with Christ, the Son of David

Isaiah 55:3-4 I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples.

This is the new covenant in the blood of Jesus... the Savior of the World;

He will spread a banqueting table in heaven and is inviting people from every nation on earth to accept His invitation to sit and feast with Him

The question this passage answers is clear... HOW CAN WE ACCEPT GOD'S INVITATION? How can we RSVP to this amazing invitation?

I. Seek the Lord While He May Be Found (vs. 6)

A. The Universal Call to Sinners: Seek the Lord

B. What Does It Mean to “Seek the Lord”?

1. Seeking has to do with yearning, desire, something you don’t have but that you want
2. Seeking Him, wanting Him, yearning for the Lord
3. Lost people: You have a sense you’re on the outside looking in; on the outside of something wonderful... you don’t know the Lord, but you realize you want Him
4. Saved people: the Lord is calling on you to a higher, more intimate relationship with Him

Matthew 6:31-33 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

The way a hungry person SEEKS food... or a man dying of thirst SEEKS water... or a cold, shivering person SEEKS a warm coat...

SO we are to seek FIRST God’s Kingdom and His righteousness

Seeking starts in the heart

C. Hebrew Poetry is Parallelism... Saying the Same Thing Twice, in slightly different words

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

Seek the Lord = Call on Him

While He may be found = while he is near

D. To “Seek the Lord” = To Call on Him

1. Simply put, we’re talking about PRAYER
2. Crying out to God in your distress; like a drowning person calls for HELP from the lifeguard, you CALL OUT
3. Like a desperate mother calls 911 when her child is severely injured... you CALL OUT for help

4. People struggle with prayer
 - a. You may feel you need to be theologically astute or specially trained
 - b. Some of you may feel you need special words or a polished prayer
 - c. But in reality, all God wants us to do is to cry out to him in a deep sense of need

Psalm 50:15 Call on Me in a day of trouble; I will rescue you, and you will honor Me.

This is clearly stated in the Book of Romans

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Romans 10:9-10 if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

E. The Urgency of This Command

1. "Seek the Lord WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND..."
2. "Call on Him WHILE HE IS NEAR..."
3. What do these words mean?
4. Similar to "holy ground" in Exodus 3

Exodus 3:2-5 the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight-- why the bush does not burn up." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." ⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

- a. If God is omnipresent, then what is "holy ground"?
- b. The concept is relational... God is choosing to set apart this ground as holy; to have a sacred encounter with Moses on this ground and at this time
- c. So also the idea of a sacred TIME in which God is open, willing, ready, calling, working...
- d. There is the implication that God will not always be so open, willing, ready, calling, working

5. How does God draw near?

a. By His word

Isaiah 55:10-11 *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

Deuteronomy 30:11-14 *Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.*

Romans 10:8-9 *"The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

God draws near to us by the proclamation of His word; as we hear what He says through the Bible, we understand that He is near, close, speaking directly to our hearts

b. By His Son

Ultimately, God is NEAR to us by the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God

c. By His Spirit

The Holy Spirit takes the word as it testifies to Jesus Christ and presses it home to the human heart; the Spirit's activity is to take the finished work of Christ on the cross and APPLY IT to sinner's hearts

When the gospel is being preached plainly, and Christ is proclaimed clearly as the Savior for sinners, the Holy Spirit is moving... that is the TIME TO RESPOND

6. TODAY IS THE DAY of salvation!!

Isaiah 49:8 *This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you, and in the day of salvation I will help you*

2 Corinthians 6:2 *I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*

- a. We don't know that all these elements will be in place tomorrow
- b. We cannot assume we will be ALIVE tomorrow, or that we will be as ready to hear it tomorrow
- c. If you hear the gospel plainly today and reject it... your heart has grown that much harder

Hebrews 3:7-8 So, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts

Hebrews 4:7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."

Day after day, today after today... God is at work in the world, drawing near to sinners by the Word, by His Son, by the Spirit

There will come a time when all this will END!!! The era of salvation will close and we will enter eternity, either saved or unsaved

Genesis 7:13 On that very day Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, together with his wife and the wives of his three sons, entered the ark...

Genesis 7:16 Then the LORD shut him in..

F. So... SEEK THE LORD NOW!!

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

II. Let the Wicked Forsake His Ways and Thoughts (vs. 7)

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

A. These Verses Describe a Key Condition for Salvation: REPENTANCE

We cannot enjoy the feast of fellowship with God unless we are willing to forsake the sins that have separated us from God!

Piper Illustration:

If you call out to God, "O God, I need you, help me!" one of the very first things that will happen in answer to that prayer is that God will awaken your conscience to something in your life that needs to be forsaken. If God answers your call in that way and you refuse to forsake what your conscience condemns, then you cease to seek God, and your words become empty. You can't seek God where he is not found, in sin.

It would be like a man who leaves his wife, moves into his own apartment, has a regular sexual affair alongside his marriage, and then gets on the phone and "calls" his wife and "seeks" his wife. And she says, "Have you forsaken this woman?" And he says, "No, I can't." Then she will rightly say, "Then you are not seeking me. Your call is empty. You will seek me and find me as your wife when you forsake her and all others for me alone, just like you vowed!"

Seeking the Lord means forsaking the ways and the thoughts that are displeasing and dishonoring to him. You can't seek him where his is not found – in sin.

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

1. Forsaking wicked ways and evil thoughts
2. Turning to the Lord, our God

B. It is a Call to the Wicked and to the Evil

1. The wicked man is called on to forsake his WAY
2. The evil man is called on to forsake his THOUGHTS

C. The Natural Mind is Wickedness... and as we THINK so we LIVE

Romans 8:5-8 For those whose lives are according to the flesh think about the things of the flesh, but those whose lives are according to the Spirit, about the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind-set of the flesh is death, but the mind-set of the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind-set of the flesh is hostile to God because it does not submit itself to God's law, for it is unable to do so. ⁸ Those whose lives are in the flesh are unable to please God.

1. The natural person, apart from the redeeming work of God in Christ has a CORRUPT MIND leading to a CORRUPT LIFESTYLE

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are

darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

2. God is calling on sinners to FORSAKE their wicked ways and their evil thoughts

D. Specifics

1. What are “wicked ways” and “evil thoughts”?
2. Scripture defines wickedness and evil by the holiness of God’s laws

Romans 1:29-31 *They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

Greed: never have enough, always want more – more food, more wine, more, fun, more money... more, always more... GREEDY

Envy: jealous of the good things that others get, burning in your heart when someone else is promoted, praised, honored... when someone else buys a nice car or lives in a nice house

Murder: most of us aren’t murderers actually, but Jesus said if we’re sinfully angry, it’s like we’ve murdered them in our hearts

Lust: in the same way, if we lust sexually after another person, it’s as though we’ve committed adultery in our hearts

Strife: arguing, conflicts, fighting... the constant irritation in relationships that makes our world, our companies, our families so miserable

Deceit: lying, falsehood

Malice: deep-seated hatred, bitterness, unforgiveness for past sins

Gossip & Slander: using your tongue to assassinate the character of someone else

God-hating: in your hearts, set against God, resisting him, hating his words, his music, his people, his laws

Insolence, Arrogance, & Boastfulness: all have to do with pride... especially toward authority figures, but in general toward everyone

Inventing Evil: creativity displayed in doing wicked things... I think about those who use their God-given intellect to find new ways to sin

Disobedience to Parents

Hard-heartedness... senseless to the feelings of others

E. REPENT! God Calls on Us To Turn Away from all these things... and to turn TOWARD God...

1. It is not enough to merely turn AWAY from wickedness
2. Repentance also means turning TO God... embracing God in love, delighting in God as you once delighted in sin
3. Cherishing God, trusting in God, yearning for God

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

III. God Infinitely Higher Than Sinners in Holiness (vs. 8-9)

A. The Call to Repentance is Direct Linked to God's Character

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

B. We Should Repent BECAUSE God's Ways are Different Than Our Ways... and His Thoughts Are Different Than Our Thoughts (vs. 8)

1. God begins by merely asserting DIFFERENCE... He thinks differently than us; He lives differently than us
2. This is WHY we should repent... a clear link to the wickedness of verse 7... "ways" and "thoughts"

C. God then Asserts that His Ways and Thoughts are HIGHER than ours

1. The highness, the loftiness, the elevation of God is here portrayed as superiority
2. God's thoughts are higher than ours meaning He thinks BETTER than we do
3. Our thoughts are in the gutter compared to His
4. Our ways are the ways of the sewer compared to His

5. This is the HOLINESS of God, His loftiness, His separation from us in our sin

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

Isaiah 57:15 For this is what the high and lofty One says-- he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place

D. The Measure is Infinite!!

Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1. God reaches for the heavens... the cosmos itself

God created the sheer magnitude of outer space to give us a sense of infinity

2. This is the measure of how much higher God's ways are than ours and His thoughts than ours

3. First of all, we should just marvel at the complexity of God's thoughts... how intricate His plans... how many details God has worked out

The most amazing mental human achievement I've ever heard of was by Miguel Najdorf, a Polish-born Argentine chess champion... in 1947 in Sao Paulo, Brazil, he played 45 chess matches simultaneously BLINDFOLDED... he kept track of all the moves, all the pieces for 45 games in his head, and won 40 of the games

God's mind is so infinitely above that that we can scarcely comprehend how much

God made Najdorf's BRAIN and orchestrates intricate history of 7 billion people every moment of every day, and all the animals, and every molecule on earth and to the edge of the cosmos

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

E. It Would Be Terrifying to Have Such a High and Holy God Sit in Judgment on our Low and Filthy Ways and Thoughts!!

IV. God Infinitely Higher Than Sinners in Mercy (vs. 8-9)

A. A Different Way to Look at the Connection Between vs. 7 & vs. 8-9

1. Certainly the connection between "ways" and "thoughts" contrasts the wickedness and evil of our ways and thoughts with those of God

2. His HOLINESS

3. But look at the very end of verse 7

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

4. God ends by promising mercy and an overwhelming pardon to sinners who repent

5. Actually, the Hebrew is amazing! NIV has “freely pardon”...KJV has “abundantly pardon”...

a. The word means “copiously, continuously”

b. It is related to the concept of multiplication

c. God’s mercy, grace, forgiveness is ABUNDANT, FREE, RICH, LAVISH

B. This is a HUGE difference between us and Him

Isaiah 55:8-9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1. The immediate link between verse 7 and verses 8-9 is the issue of how abundantly and freely God forgives sins against Him

2. We are so stingy with forgiveness... we nurse grudges, we harbor bitterness, we make people pay for hurting us

3. God LAVISHLY forgives!

Psalms 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

Hebrews 10:17 "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

Micah 7:19 You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.

The Prodigal Son: Luke 15:20-24 "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' ²² "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened

calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

This is how amazingly lavish God is with his forgiveness!

V. God's Sovereignty in Salvation

A. We Cannot Meet the Conditions Unaided

B. No One Can Seek God Unless God Seeks Us First

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

1. BUT

Romans 3:10-11 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.

2. AND

John 6:44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him

When God sovereignly draws someone by His Spirit, then and only then do sinners respond

C. God Grants Repentance

"Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts..."

BUT no one will do this unless God grants the gift of a NEW MIND... NEW HEART

Similar to this:

Genesis 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

God CREATES a new heart in us!!!

Psalms 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God

Ephesians 4:24 put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

VI. Applications

A. To the Lost: Please follow the steps of this passage!!!

- We are called to a beautiful feast... deeply, richly satisfying! At that feast we are invited to drink water, milk, and wine without money and without cost
- The feast is CHRIST and His blood shed on the cross paid the cost
- We accept the invitation to that feast by SEEKING THE LORD and CALLING UPON HIS NAME
- We must do this URGENTLY, while He may be found! The window of opportunity is closing... it will not be open forever
- We cannot come to this holy feast unless we turn from our wicked ways and evil thoughts by REPENTANCE! Turning AWAY from sin and TOWARD God
- We must realize that God is infinitely above us in holiness and purity... His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts
- We must also see the amazing promise of forgiveness of sins here – a lavish, abundant, free pardon of all our sins
- God is not like us in forgiveness either – so rich to forgive those who have so deeply hurt Him!

So... Come to Christ, dear friends!

B. This is for Believers Too!

1. These words describe an ongoing pattern of life for all time
2. We will be thirsty again and again in life... the invitation for us to drink deeply at the feast of Christ is for us too

Isaiah 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

3. We are called out of a life of idolatry... finding satisfaction in things that can never satisfy us

Isaiah 55:2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

4. Every day, meet with the Lord and satisfy your soul in Him

- a. Read the promises of Scripture and the accounts of Christ's life, death, resurrection
 - b. Find joy in these promises, find life in Christ's death and resurrection
 - c. Get yourselves into a happy state in Christ every day by Scripture and prayer
5. Beware what you are setting your heart on...
 6. SEEK CHRIST... SEEK HIM above all earthly treasures

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

7. Do you find yourselves restless, moving from one experience to the next, one dashed hope to the next? Find your delight in Christ and in His Kingdom, not on earthly things

C. Quiet Time FIRST THING

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

1. This verse is on my mind a lot as I walk downstairs in the morning for my QT
2. I am often tempted to use my iPad to read the morning's news... it's my newspaper
3. But the Lord wants this:

Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Exodus 23:19 "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God

4. God wants the FIRST PART of my day
5. Furthermore, Isaiah 55:6 implies that if I refuse to give God the first part of the day, He may not meet with me later in the same way!!

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near.

D. Repent of all Known Sin

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

1. Ask the Lord to reveal your sins to you... deeply, fully, clearly

2. We are no longer wicked, but we do wicked things and follow a wicked way
TEMPORARILY...
3. We are no longer evil... but we occasionally think evil thoughts
4. We need to turn from these things and turn back to our loving God
5. We need to CONFESS THESE SINS and He will freely, abundantly,
amazingly pardon us

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

E. Stand Amazed at the MIND of the Lord and His WAYS

Isaiah 55:9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1. Marvel at the perfect HOLINESS of His ways and thoughts... God is pure light, in Him no darkness!
2. Marvel also at the complexity and perfection of His mind as unfolded in His redemptive historical plan
3. Do not expect to be able to understand, to comprehend, to take in fully everything God is doing
4. Eternal predestination, reprobation, the sovereign control of providential events, the unfolding of history is BEYOND US!

Romans 11:33-34 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?"

5. When some terrible circumstance happens to you, realize that God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts
6. Do not think you could write a better story than God!

Rob Bell: "Some stories are better than others."

7. Let's give up questioning God, accusing Him of foolishness or wrongdoing
8. Be like Job

Job 40:3-5 Then Job answered the LORD: ⁴ "I am unworthy-- how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. ⁵ I spoke once, but I have no answer-- twice, but I will say no more."

F. We Have the Mind of Christ... and Someday we will think and act exactly like Him!!

1 Corinthians 2:16 we have the mind of Christ.

1 John 3:2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

We shall think like Christ and love what Christ loves and hate what Christ hates and delight in what Christ delights in...

We shall be perfectly conformed to Him in every way!!

So... our sanctification journey is one of increasing conformity to His mind

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.