

Foundations: The Prophets 5
BE FILLED
Isaiah 55 (AFBC 6/3/18)

Welcome and Greetings.....Josh Hunt

BE FILLED: *Invitation*--Isaiah 55:1-3

Call to Worship.....Jim Thomason

Leader: "Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!

**People: Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?**

Leader: Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

**People: Give ear and come to me;
hear me, that your soul may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
my faithful love promised to David.**

Hymn No. 314.....Whosoever Will

Invocation.....Josh Hunt

**The Baptism of Those Who Have Responded to Christ's Invitation
(Names of baptismal candidates)**

Anthem, etc. ???.....

Praise and Worship.....Praise Team

Offering/Doxology/Prayer

BE FILLED: *Justification*—Isaiah 55:6-9

Hymn No. 575.....I Will Sing of My Redeemer

Meditation.....Jim Thomason

Isaiah 55 begins, "Come, all you who are thirsty...." We continue reading from this chapter now beginning with verse 6:

- 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call on him while he is near.**
- 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.**
- 8 "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.**

Earlier in the service, we sang the old Gospel hymn, "Whosoever Will May Come." It's been years since I last sang it—maybe for you as well. I hope we "did it justice."

The opening verses of Isaiah 55 bring this hymn to mind for me! "**Come, all... all who are thirsty!**" Years later, the hymn writer gave us his interpretation of those words: "**Whosoever will may come**"—"all who are thirsty may come, and drink."

That's grace—the grace of a loving God who extends His invitation to *all*. Notice here that long before the full reach of God's invitation were made known to us in Christ Jesus, the prophet Isaiah got it. Inspired by the Spirit, he wrote it down!

This is why we say there's Gospel in these writings. God announced to the world through His prophet Isaiah: "**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.**" (v. 1)

No money—no *problem*. We don't hear THAT every day! But what God offers us, we could never afford anyway—no matter how much money we have. His invitation to us... is priceless.

A few weeks ago, there was a big wedding over "across the pond"—a royal wedding. You probably heard about it! I hope you listened to it--it was good--as in Gospel good!

But it did fall short of Gospel in this way: everyone was not invited. In fact, there was lots of speculation concerning who would be on the guest list. To be honest, most of the folks invited were well off—right?—at least enough to meet the dress code.

Now, there're no such requirements on God's invitation to us. In case there's any confusion about this, Jesus made it clear when He told a parable about a marriage banquet for a King's son.

When the guests didn't show—remember?—He sent his servants out to invite everyone to come. Go down every highway and byway, he told them, and let them know: they're all... invited.

Ya'll ALL come!—that's the grace of this invitation—God's unearned, undeserved, unexpected, unthinkable invitation to you and me and everyone else—including folks that we personally would never think to invite—or perhaps even... choose not to!

What makes this "grace"... is that we wouldn't know about God's party at all had He not chosen to let us in on it. We wouldn't be able to show up for it either but for the fact that God gives us the means to do so. It's all a gift, you see--pure gift!

In Isaiah 55, water is offered to everyone who's thirsty. We simply reach out in humble faith and gratitude, realizing that we can't meet this need for ourselves, so... we accept God's gift. We drink the water He offers freely, and our thirst is quenched.

In the Bible, water is a symbol of God's presence. Our thirst reminds us of our need for God. There's a thirst in each of our lives that only He can satisfy; and even this thirst is a work of God's grace, as surely as is the water He supplies to quench it.

In the fourth chapter of John's Gospel, Jesus encounters a very thirsty woman. Seems that she thought the right husband would quench her thirst—she'd had five of them so far.

Then Jesus offers her "living water," promising that if she would only drink the water He could give her, she'd never be thirsty again. Instead, this drink would become in her 'a spring of water welling up to eternal life.' (John 4:13-14)

When we realize our need, and know that it's our rebellion against God that makes us thirst for something more satisfying in life, and then as a result we confess our sin and turn to Jesus Christ,

receiving Him as Savior and Lord, God's word says we are then "justified."

We say that we're "saved"—and we are; but we're still being saved, because salvation is a process. Many people don't understand this--that the grace of salvation continues to work in to bring about sanctification, and then glorification—both of which we'll get to in a moment.

The Bible says that first, though, when we embrace the Good News of Jesus and receive Him by faith, we are "justified." To get at what this means, think "just as if I had never sinned."

God removes our sin from us as far as the east is from the west. We're forgiven. The slate is wiped clean. Thus, we stand before God justified--in a new and right relationship with Him that keeps on changing us for the better all through this life and in eternity.

Baptism is part of this. We witnessed this earlier when Amy baptized Damien and Ethan. That water that symbolizes God's presence and His ability to quench our thirst becomes baptismal waters that remind us of how our lives have been washed clean and made brand new—by the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The Lord's Supper, which we'll share together in a moment, is also part of this. Just as the Lord invites us to come to Him and receive forgiveness and life, He now encourages us to reflect deeply on the price He paid to make this possible: His body broken, His blood shed—for us.

As we once again receive the bread and the cup, may we all remember this grace that no amount of money could buy and no good works could ever earn. They're gifts, freely offered to us by the God who loves us too much to not give them.

If you know Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, if you have faith to believe that's it's only by His grace, and not because of any personal merit, that you're in this saving, life-changing relationship with God, then I invite you now to receive this bread, the symbol of Christ's body broken for you.

The Serving of the Bread

Choir Anthem: *Come Just As You Are*

Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.
This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,
and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is
real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh
and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him."

(John 6:51, 54-56)

BE FILLED: *Sanctification and Glorification*

Isaiah 55:10-11

One day in the funny papers, Charlie Brown was reflecting on his life. "Sometimes I lie awake at night," he says, "and I ask, 'Where have I gone wrong?' Then a voice says to me, 'Charlie Brown, this is going to take more than one night.'"

Well, I suppose we're all "more than one night" people. By God's grace, we own up to our sin; and by this same grace, we discover that God has been inviting us all along to come, and drink, and be filled. In this process, we realize that it's actually God for whom we have thirsted all along.

So we respond by confessing our sin and receiving the Savior. In Christ, we're justified before God—again, "just as if we had never sinned." We're God's children now, and nothing can ever take this relationship away from us.

But, friends, this doesn't mean we take God's grace and put it on a shelf. His grace continues to be at work within us.

Saying "yes" to God's invitation to be justified in Christ Jesus is a wonderful and absolutely essential starting point; but we're not finished. God is not finished. His work of grace continues.

That on-going influence of grace in our lives is called "sanctification." It's all about growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's about becoming more of what God knows our lives can be. Listen to the next couple of verses from Isaiah 55 (vv. 10-11):

**10 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.**

We've seen the rains fall—and, on rare occasions, some snow. They come here with a purpose: to water the earth, causing it to bud and flourish, producing 'seed for the sower and bread for the eater,' as Isaiah tells us in his song.

Then he makes his point--that God's word also has a purpose: to cause new growth *in us*. God's grace enriches our souls and enables our lives to reflect more and more the presence of Christ in us. Growing in grace, you see, is always about you and me becoming more like Christ Jesus.

The Lord uses many resources to help us with this, including what we do here. A disgruntled church member wrote a letter to the editor of his local paper complaining that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday.

"I've gone for 30 years now," he said, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time... and the preachers are wasting theirs."

Well, this started a bit of a controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, much to the delight of everyone at the newspaper. It went on for weeks... until someone wrote this:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time, my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals."

"But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. Without these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church

for nourishment each Lord's Day, I would now be spiritually dead!" Thank God for our physical and our spiritual nourishment!

Grace... extends the invitation. Grace... declares us justified before God. Grace... continues to grow us up, to sanctify us, in Christ Jesus.

And one day, according to God's promises, His grace will carry us home "to glory" where we will be perfected—transformed fully and completely by God's amazing grace. And that's... "glorification."

**"Whosoever will," the promise is secure,
"Whosoever will," forever must endure;
"Whosoever will," 'tis life forevermore: and...
"Whosoever will... may come."**

The Serving of the Cup

Organ: *Amazing Grace*

...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."

(John 7:37; 4:14; 7:38)

BE FILLED: *An Invitation to Discipleship*

Isaiah 55:12-13

¹² You will go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and hills
will burst into song before you,
and all the trees of the field
will clap their hands.

¹³ Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree,

and instead of briars the myrtle will grow.
 This will be for the LORD's renown,
 for an everlasting sign,
 which will not be destroyed."

That's grace, friends—transforming the ugly and useless into something beautiful and helpful. Or to put this simply: God's grace changes us for the better by making us more like Jesus.

But God won't ever force this on us. Instead, He invites us to freely receive His gift of grace. Here it is again:

"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.
 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.
 Give ear and come to me;
 hear me, that your soul may live.

Hymn No. 323.....Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy

By grace, we come to Christ; by grace, we grow in Him. And life becomes more about Christ... and less about us. The Prayer of St. Patrick expresses this so well. Please pray it with me as we close:

Unison Benediction.....from the Prayer of St. Patrick

**Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me,
 Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
 Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
 Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
 Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
 Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
 Christ in every eye that sees me,
 Christ in every ear that hears me. Amen.**