

The Inviting God
Isaiah 55
November 17th, 2019

Big idea: God invites spiritually hungry and needy people to come to Him

Intro

John Piper - We use the word inviting in a couple different ways.

This room is *inviting* – it's pleasant and attractive and you feel drawn to come, maybe it's the way the light streams through the windows, or the fireplace crackles and throws off heat

John is *inviting* us to come to his house for a meal – something special is happening and the host wants you to come. They are taking initiative to include you and draw you in.

God is inviting in both of these ways and we see this in Isaiah 55.

Context

Comes as a follow up to Isaiah 53. That chapter had the rich description of Jesus' death for us in our place for our sins to bring us peace, *shalom*. It included descriptions that came true in clear ways – He wasn't outwardly impressive, He was rejected, not esteemed, He was pierced, He was buried in a rich man's tomb. But it didn't include something for us to do. It was a description without an invitation. Here is the invitation.

It pours out of this passage. 12 inviting verbs in just the first 3 verses – come, buy, eat, listen, delight

We'll see this in two parts. The first part has a great invitation. The second part tells us more about how we can answer this great invitation.

1. Come to the ***feast!*** (55:1-5)

The invitation pours out of this passage

12 inviting verbs in just the first 3 verses – come, buy, eat, listen, delight

Ask 3 questions as we study it:

Who is invited?

What are they offered?

What are they told to do to get it?

a. Who is ***invited?***

i. Two kinds of people – and you might fit in one of these categories.

ii. First, people who thirst but have no money – they are thirsty and broke

1. Everyone! – the doors are thrown open wide

2. You feel spiritually empty, spiritually dry, spiritually thirsty. One author described it like the grass outside this time of year – brown, dry, brittle, seemingly lifeless. Maybe you feel like that right now. They are described as “without money” – they don't feel like they have it in them to solve their problems. They are dry and feel distant from God. God says, come! Drink deeply! Eat!

a. For that person, life hasn't gone how they wanted and they know it.

b. They are like the poor in spirit that Jesus talks about in Matthew 5 – they are spiritually bankrupt and they know it, they feel it.

- c. We need not limit this to those who have never responded to the gospel. You might have been a Christian for a long time but feel dry, distant, like in a spiritual desert.
 - 3. Jesus uses the same analogy
 - a. **John 7:37-38** ³⁷ Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.
 - 4. Or maybe life has gone how you wanted but after you got what you thought you wanted you realized that didn't satisfy. That's the next category.
- iii. Second, people have money but have spent it on the wrong things – the self-sufficient.
 - 1. They had money and they spent money, but not wisely. They spent it on what was not bread, what would not satisfy.
 - 2. **Jeremiah 2:13** "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.
 - 3. The world is full of good things that can delight us – there can be delight in work, in exploring the wild, in relationships, in art, in beauty – but when we make those secondary things the ultimate thing, they don't satisfy.
 - 4. John Piper: "He's not like the other guy — burnt out, at the end of his rope. He is still spending and still working, dreaming, chasing, searching, experimenting — different job, different city, different car, different house, different wife, new computer, new boat, new books, new bike, new grill, new season tickets, new diet, new looks — there's still a lot of looking around left in this person. But still no pot at the end of the rainbow. No fountain of youth. And every triumph peters out. The applause fades. The boat is boring. The style passes. Everything new gets old, and the options get fewer and fewer."
 - 5. Maybe that's you. Maybe you have what 10 years ago you thought you wanted, and yet you don't feel satisfied.
- b. What are they offered?
 - i. The analogy: Come for free, satisfying food (1-2a)
 - 1. Water – necessity of life
 - a. **John 4:13-14** Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."
 - 2. Wine and milk – not just the basics, but flourishing
 - a. When you're thirsty, you need water. When you want a baby to grow, you give her milk, daily, a steady diet.
 - b. Wine was for celebrations!
 - i. Eat what is good!
 - ii. Delight in abundance!
 - 1. The meal God invites us to is inviting!

- ii. The reality: Come to the living God (2b-5)
 - 1. What was metaphor (come to the water!) is now reality (come to Me!)
 - 2. Youth kids talking about literal and metaphorical language in scripture on Wednesday.
 - 3. What people are offered is God Himself – He is what satisfies, He is what gives life – listen to Him and come to him.
 - 1. **Psalm 73:25-26** Whom have I in heaven *but You*? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.
 - 2. He promises to make an everlasting covenant – an everlasting promise – based on the covenant made with David.
 - a. That covenant promised a king in the line of David whose kingdom would last forever – that’s king Jesus.
 - 3. We don’t want a gospel that is merely about meeting felt needs – you’re lonely, God will give you friends. You’re sad, God will give you joy. But, this passage puts a finger on the felt experience of life apart from God and invites people to come to the living God.

c. What are they told **to do** to get it?

- i. There is a response – we come, buy, eat, enjoy
- ii. If you are distant from God, come to Him. He invites you!
- iii. Don’t just analyze and evaluate, buy! Make a decision. It’s a strange transaction because in this analogy you’re broke. So the language of buying is simply language of choosing and receiving rather than passively sitting back.
- iv. Eat and enjoy –
 - 1. **Psalm 16:11** You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.
- v. The next section describes what we are to do with even less metaphorical language.

2. Seek the **Lord** (55:6-13)

a. Our responsibility: **Forsake** and return (55:6-7a)

- i. Seek and call upon the Lord while He may be found – this is a time of opportunity in this life. He’s near, He’s inviting.
 - 1. It’s a command, but it’s an invitation, in the same way that you might “command” your kids on Thanksgiving day, “Come to the table!” or on Christmas morning – “open your presents!”
- ii. Forsake not just our ways but our thoughts that are wrong – actually uses stronger words – they are the thoughts and ways of the wicked, the unrighteous.
 - 1. Broad and deep – our ways and our thoughts
- iii. Return to the Lord
 - 1. Great description of repentance – forsaking and returning

2. Not merely feeling sad about actions or guilty about thoughts, although emotion is appropriate, but coming to our senses and seeing them as they are. That's actually how repentance is sometimes described.
3. Parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 – “he came to his senses”
4. **2 Timothy 2:25-26** with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
5. Kids – you are a moral creature – you have been created by God with a sense of right and wrong living inside you. We call this our conscience. It's one of the best evidences that Christianity is true – can't deny that we know right and wrong, can't deny that we break it.
6. **Proverbs 28:13** He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion.

b. God's response: Compassion and **pardon** (55:7b)

- i. Both sides of repentance are here – forsaking and returning – as are both sides of the Lord's response
 1. Subjectively: mercy/compassion, the surging love of the divine heart,
 2. Objectively: pardon, the actual forgiveness of sins.
 - a. Not just kind of forgive – abundantly pardon, just as in v. 2 we are invited to delight ourselves in abundance.
- ii. If we are to forgive like God forgives us, do you respond with “pardon and compassion” when someone asks for your forgiveness?

c. Three great assurances (55:8-13)

Notice a series of verses that start with the word “for.” I've labeled these as three great assurances that support the invitations to come, forsake, return and receive compassion and pardon.

i. God's **ways** are not our ways (8-9)

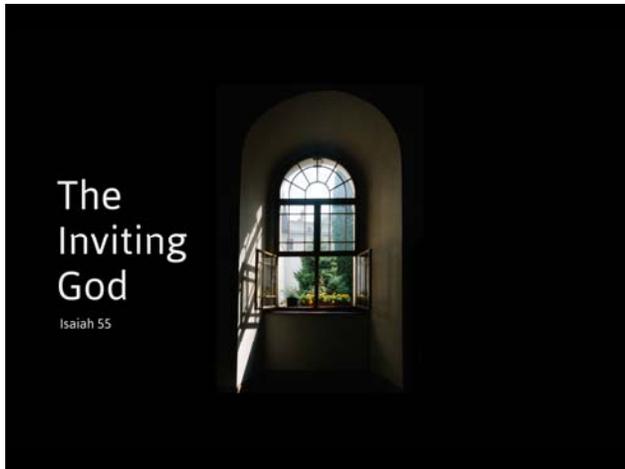
1. We often use this verse when talking about the ways in which God is different from us in His nature.
 - a. He doesn't get tired. He knows everything. He has no beginning.
 - b. Kids and adults alike struggled with understanding God because He is so different than us.
2. That is true and this verse supports it, but the main point of this verse is that our ways and thoughts need to be forsaken from v 7 because they are not in line with God's ways and thoughts.
3. We have an urgent need of repentance not just because of the horizontal damage that comes from sin, but because of the vast difference between our thoughts and God's.
4. God is radically different than us. And that's good.

ii. God's **Word** will accomplish God's goals (10-11)

1. Rain comes down, waters the earth, produces growth, meets our need
 - a. The people in the promised land were very dependent on rain, unlike the Egyptians who could depend on the Nile and those in Mesopotamia would rely on the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. If the rain didn't come, the people starved.
2. God's Word is like this rain
 - a. It comes from above – from Him
 - b. It brings life
 - c. It bears fruit
3. God's Word will accomplish His goals – what Word specifically? His call to come, His call to repent, His great invitation.

iii. There will be future *joy* (12-13)

1. The "you" includes "you" – it's the same "you" that responds to the invitation to come.
2. When will this take place?
 - a. Metaphorical language of rejoicing
 - b. But in v 13 we get a description of thorns being replaced with cypress and nettle with myrtle – it's a description of the curse since the time of Adam being rolled back after Jesus' return.
 - i. **Genesis 3:17-18** Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;
 - c. The ending of Isaiah speaks to this often. Watch for it as you wrap up your reading in Isaiah this week.
 - i. **Isaiah 60:1-2** Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² "For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you.
 - ii. **Isaiah 65:17-18** "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. ¹⁸ "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem *for* rejoicing And her people *for* gladness.
 - iii. We are grafted in to that promise like branches grafted in to a tree.
3. In this renewed and restored creation you will be happy and have peace – shalom.



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