

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 55

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 55

Theme: "A Call to Return to the LORD!"

THEME VERSES

Isaiah 55:6-7 (KJV) "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: **7** Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

INTRODUCTION

Straying from the LORD is a common phenomenon nowadays. Perhaps more so in this age of entrepreneurship where cross ocean travelling time is in terms of hours and communication is measured in terms of seconds rather than minutes. With the slide of one finger, a person can access or communicate with anyone in the world from any place in the world. This advancement in technology has changed the lives of humanity forever. There is no turning back. Because of this, many Christians are challenged in

their faith, service and devotion to Christ.

Sadly many have succumbed and backslidden from their faith. The love of the world has snared them. They stopped attending church to worship God and stopped praying to God. Another god has taken over their heart and mind in ways that resemble Lot. They might be vexed in their spirit every day they wake up if they are truly born again. But they do not have the courage and moral and spiritual strength to stop sinning and return back to Christ in humble repentance. They could not let go their hold on materialism until it is nearly too late for the best years of their lives are behind them and when they awake to their folly, they are filled with great regret and shame. How they wished they could have stopped sinning sooner and serve the LORD for more years and in better health than they are right now with one foot already in the grave.

If they have no feelings at all in their state of sin and love for the world then they probably are not born again in the first place. Sadly there are more who are like the latter than the former. These are the ones who would turn their back to the LORD by finding prayer a waste of time and the worship of the LORD in God's house a place for losers. The attractions of the world gripped them so tightly that they lust after the things of this world with a fervency and zeal that burns within their soul. They are consumed by their lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. Their pride of life sets in deeper and deeper like a gang of pirates

digging deep trenches to fortify their booty. Materialism consumes them and they delight in it.

Isaiah wrote to appeal to both these groups of Israelites. They were found inside Israel (including Judah). The call to return to the LORD is needed more so than ever before. Will you return to the LORD if you have strayed from Him?

OUTLINE

1. A Call to Believe (vv.1-5);
2. The Time to Believe (vv. 6-7);
3. The Agent of Belief (vv. 8-13);

COMMENTARY

A Call to Believe – 55:1-5

The call is to everyone who is thirsty. This is spiritual thirst. No one will come to the living water to drink from it if they do not realize they have a thirst. The spiritual thirst is one of an emptiness of soul. Money, luxury, health, including the love of spouse and family and friends could not quench this thirst. This thirst causes life to lose its taste. Everything becomes sterile and meaningless. The Word of God touches these spiritually needy people. This water is given free of charge. Money cannot buy this water. God's call is to all including those with no money for what they purchase is without a price. But they need to come. If they do not come then they would die of thirst even if the water is placed right in front of them.

They need to stretch forth their hands to take up that water to drink it.

Materialism can never satisfy the thirsty soul. Materialism cannot fill the empty stomachs that are made of non-material substance. Many have tried and failed. They have worked hard and were never satisfied. If they were satisfied then they would have stopped striving. They worked until they dropped dead! Money was spent to buy food that is not bread. No matter how much they ate, they eat again the next day. They kept on eating until they die! But the food and water that the LORD offers will satisfy for life and last into eternity! He who comes and drinks from the living water and eats the living bread will never be thirsty or hungry ever again!

Come and listen and obey the call of the LORD and your soul will live. This implies that the hearers are dead. They are actually dead in sin. They do not know it yet because they are blind. If they were to come to the LORD, He will make an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David. The sure mercies of David refer of course to the mercies of Christ. King David was promised that through him the Messiah would come. Christ would be a witness to the people, a leader and a commander to the people.

The people would not be limited to Israel but to many nations, the Gentiles. The Israelites do not know them. But these nations would know Israel and would run to Israel because of the LORD, the God of Israel. He is called the Holy One of Israel. He is

none other than Jesus Christ. This is more than just a continuous pilgrimage to Israel that Isaiah was referring to. This is a spiritual identification that all believers of the world have with Israel because Christ came from Israel. This invisible heartfelt link cannot be explained or denied. The LORD has glorified Israel in this regard. Israel will be the nation that will bring blessings to other nations because of Jesus Christ. Will Israel now return to the LORD knowing that she has a great spiritual responsibility to the rest of the world?

The Time to Believe – 55:6-7

The time to call on the LORD is now. Do not wait at all. To procrastinate is to put oneself in mortal danger. Eternity in Hell is what awaits all who will die in their sin. The urgency is to seek the LORD immediately. They must stop whatever they are doing and seek the LORD right now until the LORD is found. No one must prevent them from seeking the LORD. Nothing in this life is more important than seeking the LORD. Delay no longer. The verb "seek" is a command. It is not an option cried Isaiah. Isaiah also used the verb "call" which means to cry out loud so that the LORD can hear.

The reason for the urgency is while the LORD may still be found and while He is near. There will come a time when the LORD will no longer be found. This happens in two ways. The sinner could die and he stands before God for judgement and be consigned to Hell. The time to believe is now when he is still alive. The other time

when the LORD is no longer found is when the LORD hardens the heart of the sinner. Then he ceases to be able to repent of his sins. He has been judicially hardened by the LORD, permanently, just as He did to Pharaoh in the days of Moses at the ten plagues. One must not presume that he can always believe in the LORD and that the knocking on the heart's door will never end. The nearness of the LORD is now when God sends His prophets to give them the Word to call them to come to Him. The voice can stop anytime.

Coming to the LORD must be on God's terms. The wicked must forsake his ways. This means that he must turn from his ways and not commit any more sins. The evil deeds and everything that is associated with wickedness must stop immediately. He must repent of his sins. The thoughts of the unrighteous man must also cease. The former deals with visible sins whereas the latter deals with invisible sins. These must also stop because the LORD knows every action and the heart and mind of every sinner.

With a heart and a mind ready to stop sinning, then return to the LORD. This is the approach of every sinner before salvation. It is an unconditional surrender of self and life to Christ. Then the LORD will have mercy i.e. punishment deserved but withheld by God. The reason for God to withhold punishment is Christ has been punished on the sinner's behalf on the cross. With the sinner's sins dealt with by Christ, the LORD

pardons. The pardon is based upon the mercies of the LORD upon the sinner. From sinner to saint is only a prayer away. Such a short step to a life of unending bliss in the presence of God!

The Agent of Belief – 55:8-13

The thoughts of the LORD are not like that of man's. His ways are also not man's ways. This is something sinful man finds very difficult to accept. Man has been making God into his own image since the time of Cain and Abel. Man has not stopped. God has to show man that He is very different from man. His way of thinking regarding sin and salvation and His ways of doing things are based upon righteousness and holiness whereas man's way is the opposite. Man's ways are unrighteous and evil. How different are the ways of God compared to that of man? It is as different as the difference between the heavens and the earth. The ways and thoughts of the LORD are so high that man can never and will never reach them.

The Word of God encapsulates the thoughts and ways of God. His Word is perfect and they reveal who God is, what He has done and will do, and what His thoughts are. The means that brings salvation and reveal God's ways and thoughts is the perfect Word of God. The powerful Word of God is like the rain and the snow that come down from the heavens. It will water the earth and makes the earth fertile to bring forth bud and give seed to the sower who will bring bread to his home. The water and snow of the

heavens will not return without fulfilling this express purpose.

The Word of God will also bring forth the same result and will not return to the LORD without first fulfilling its purposes of saving souls and strengthening the faith of believers. The powerful Word of God is ignored by God's people today. It has been taught in seminaries and Bible Colleges that gimmicks in bringing in sinners are better than the pure preaching of God's Word. The cause of this spiritual decay is the low view of the Bible. Practically every seminary and Bible College all over the world teaches that the Bible has mistakes today! Churches are bankrupt in their souls because the pastors that graduate from these sick seminaries and Colleges are selling their evil wares. The hearts and minds of church goers are filled with entertainment which these modern day pastors have cunningly promoted as substitutes for God's Word. This is the price for throwing away the most blessed and powerful detergent God gave to mankind to cleanse himself of all his filthy sins.

The result of one who turns back to the LORD is joy and peace. The singing and clapping of hands praising the LORD would be heard all over Israel. Israel would be a nation of godly saints instead of godless idolaters. The nations of the world would hear of her transformed spiritual life and her blessings would spread far and wide, turning more sinners away from their sins and back to the LORD. Israel would be fruitful. Instead of

thorns, fir trees shall come forth from within Israel. Fir trees are tall and stately and very useful and fragrant.¹ Instead of brier (a kind of sharp thorny bush), which is prickly and hurtful, the ones who return to the LORD would become the myrtle tree.² The myrtle tree is scented and edible whereas the brier is useless, a nuisance and meant to hurt.

The LORD would turn all, who return to Him, to live a life that is fragrant and a blessing to others. Their lives would be fruitful. The LORD would be pleased to make their name an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. It is the name Christian! Amen.

¹This tree was one of the chief trees of Lebanon (Isa 60:13); one of usefulness (Isa 41:19; 55:13; associated with the cedar (2Ki 19:23; Ps 104:17; Isa 14:8; Zec 11:2); its boughs were wide and great (Eze 31:8); it was evergreen (Ho 14:8); it could supply boards and timber for doors (1Ki 6:15,24); beams for roofing the temple (2Ch 3:5); planks for shipbuilding (Eze 27:5). [ISBE, Swordsearcher 6.2]

²"The myrtle, *Myrtus communis* (Natural Order Myrtaceae), is a very common indigenous shrub all over Palestine. On the bare hillsides it is a low bush, but under favorable conditions of moisture it attains a considerable height (compare Zec 1:8,10). It has dark green, scented leaves, delicate starry white flowers and dark-colored berries, which are eaten." [ISBE, Swordsearcher 6.2]

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 55:1-13

TUESDAY: Isaiah 55:1-13

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 55:1-13

THURSDAY: Isaiah 55:1-13

FRIDAY: Isaiah 55:1-13

Discussion Questions

1. Have you experienced a spiritual thirst before? Has your thirst been quenched? What quenched your thirst? What does it feel like to have this thirst quenched? Did this thirst ever return after it has been quenched?

2. What is the best way to pray for someone who has strayed away from the LORD and is in love with the world?

3. When will the LORD not be found by the sinner today? When will the LORD no longer be near the sinner today? Are these two warnings applicable today?

4. Could a person who did not surrender his all to Christ at the time of salvation be truly born again? Did you surrender your all to the LORD at all? If a person surrenders his all to the LORD at the time of salvation, could he then take back some of his "all" after salvation while he is serving?

5. Do believers have the thoughts of God and the ways of God? Are they the same in aims, hopes and aspirations?

6. Have you experienced the power of the Word of God in transforming your life? Please elaborate.

7. What lessons have you learnt from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?
