



Sunday, December 15, 2019
Pastor Don Denyes

Intro to Isaiah 55:1-13

The mercy of God is not a theory; it's an experience. God wants us to richly enjoy the good gifts He has won for us in Christ. As Pastor Ray Ortlund has said, "His invitation is too good to refuse, too urgent to delay. Isaiah 55:1 lies so close to the heart of God, it reappears at the very end of the Bible as God's final word to us all until Christ returns (Revelation 22:17). *This is the message God wants every member of the human race to hear.*"

Indeed.

Most other world religions focus on what we can do to achieve salvation, or something related to that idea. But only Christianity talks about how God has done the work for us. That is what makes the gospel good *news* and not good *advice*, as Tim Keller would say. So, as we think about the Christmas season, it really is about receiving a gift, but not in the shallow, materialistic way we tend to think. It's about receiving the ultimate gift of God—every spiritual blessing in Christ, and to know for certain that it is all of grace, bought without cost (to us, anyway). May we respond in loving faith, given the magnitude of the gift we have received!

Context

Isaiah has been considered the "fifth gospel" throughout church history, and for good reason. Isaiah prophesied a few generations before the people were taken into exile, but God had already revealed to him the path that the people were on. Their sins had led them astray to live in a pitiful condition, but they couldn't see it yet. Isaiah was sent to tell them that God was not pleased with them and that they needed to repent in order to be saved, but, significantly, their obstinance was part of God's plan, as He says in 6:9, "Keep on hearing, but do not understand, keep on seeing but do not perceive." Praise God that He has given us ears to hear and eyes to see and respond appropriately to the gospel!

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Isaiah 55:1-13

“Christmas Presence”

God’s mercy is offered to us (1-5)

- Free provisions
- Free pardon

God’s mercy is inconceivable to us (6-9)

- Radically different from ours
- Greatly elevated above us

God’s mercy comes down to us (10-13)

- The word sent to us
- Waters the earth
- Always succeeds
- Returns to heaven

Jesus is God’s Word

- Comes down from heaven
- Waters the earth
- Always succeeds
- Returns to heaven

Respond

- Turn from your ways (7)
- Turn/trust Jesus as Savior and Lord (1-3, 6-7)
- Experience peace and joy (12)

Christmas is for the broken!

Jesus is God’s mercy come down to us!

Discuss

- 1) Why might the “freeness” of the gospel make it more difficult for someone to believe?
- 2) What is an example of how God’s ways go beyond your understanding?
- 3) Pastor Don said, “Christmas is for the broken.” How acutely aware are you of your own brokenness before God? How does that make you appreciate the meaning of Christmas?
- 4) Read Hosea 6:1-3. How does this passage challenge you to respond to the gospel?
- 5) Isaiah 55:1-3 gives us a glimpse of the future glory of the new heavens and the new earth (see Rev. 22:16-17). How does the hope of future glory motivate us to seek the LORD here and now?