

## The God who Speaks

If you are a Christian here tonight your faith is dependent on two Words, "God Speaks." Not merely God Spoke, which is certainly true, but God speaks today through His Word. Hebrews tells us that The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two edged sword... it is living today-- God is speaking to us through His Word even tonight.

But of course throughout history not everyone has felt this way about the Bible. Think of all the times throughout history when the Christians were sneered at and mocked because of their belief that God's speaks truth to his people. From Voltaire claiming that the Bible "by the early nineteenth century would have passed into the limbo of forgotten literature." (Quoted in Ortlund Isaiah, 162) to Thomas Jefferson cutting out things from the Bible that he didn't agree with-- and even sadly people who went by the name of Christian but signed declarations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that denied the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement and the resurrection of Christ. (from Frame p.20 DKWG)

I want us to realize two very important things about the Word of God:

What you believe about the Bible will dictate what you believe about God. What a church believes about the Bible will dictate the health and lifespan of that church.

Maybe you are here tonight and have never considered that God has spoken, or maybe perhaps you have lived much of your life thinking about God's Word. Whatever your situation, Christian or non-Christian, convinced or investigating--its my desire that as we look at the Bible tonight, God's Word to us in the book of Isaiah, that you would encounter this God who speaks and that you would see the grand plan of God. To do that we'll focus on are three things about this God who speaks-- He is a God who Speaks grace, he is a God who speaks Promise, He is a God who speaks purpose.

### CONTEXT

As you turn to Isaiah 55, let me talk briefly about the book of Isaiah because it can be a daunting book. You might be tempted to think of Isaiah like a set of law books in an attorneys office-- good and useful information for somebody-- but largely unknown to you and inaccessible to you. Sixty-six chapters long written by the prophet Isaiah.

Dr. Leland Ryken, a Wheaton College professor has said that Isaiah is a "one volume book of theology, with emphasis on God's sovereignty, judgment against evil, and mercy." (Literary Study Bible note) In Isaiah we learn of God's splendor, his holiness, his judgment against sin, his salvation and grace.

It's probably easiest to divide the book up into three sections. The second main section of the book which we are in tonight, chapters 40-55, is looking forward from Isaiah's own time to the time that would find the southern tribe of Judah having been taken off into exile on account of their sins by the Babylonian empire.

In chapter 55 we find a message to the people of God in exile and having been defeated by the Babylonians. It's almost like a message in a bottle or time capsule that Isaiah prophetically wrote long before but would have brought great hope in exile. Starting in chapter 40, God is essentially saying, "don't worry-- trust me." The Lord then comforts his people through the promise of the Servant-- the servant who will Suffer, being crushed by God for our iniquities in order to bring peace and salvation. The great chapter 53 is followed by the celebration of the Suffering Servant's work in 54 and 55.

## **God Speaks Grace**

So let's look at God's Word now in chapter 55 and see first, God speaks Grace.

Look at verse 1, the call to the poor and thirsty; "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come buy and eat! Come buy wine and milk without money and without price." To know God and be known by Him would surely be worth any price. But yet here, we see that this priceless gift cannot be bought with money but is freely given for people to receive.

Notice here, who is being called to receive God's provision-- the thirsty and the poor. The provision of God is given by grace. His calling out to those who recognize they are thirsty and poor shows us He is a compassionate God.

Furthermore, What we read in verse 2 shows us even more of his grace because he is making this call to those who have traded his glory for lesser things. "Why do you spend your money on that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"

If you do feel unworthy of taking God's gifts, that's actually a good thing. Jesus didn't come to the healthy but the sick. Jesus came and promised blessing to him who hungered and thirsted for righteousness. Here in Isaiah 55, this is a call to the poor and thirsty. To the one who has no money to come buy God's provision-- and look at the end of verse 2-- it's not a meager provision-- God gives in abundance!

"Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."

What is translated "rich food" in the ESV at the end of verse 2 is a word for fat--, to delight your soul in the fat. Which, honestly might not communicate that much to us since we do all that we can to cut the fat off the meat-- but fat was a symbol of luxury and abundance. So what we really see here is God asking the people why they are trading money for worthless things rather than coming to him without money and being filled with abundance.

God was comforting His people in exile by calling them once again to himself to receive abundance. Pointing out to them that the only place they could turn in adversity or abundance is to Him.

Maybe that is what you need to hear tonight-- maybe you are discouraged by your sin, or undergoing a great trial because of your own sin or even have neglected him for years.

Maybe you feel like you have to earn God's favor before you come to his table and eat of his good things-- maybe you feel unworthy or maybe things have been going so well that it is far too easy for you to ignore Him.

This passage drips with the fat of the gospel-- Trying to pay for our sin ourselves can never be done, but coming to the one who calls us and receive his gift of forgiveness is the only way our sin is forgiven. There is a price, make no mistake about it, but Who pays the price? God does-- glance back at Isaiah 53:6 "all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." 2 Cor 8:9

It was the will of the Lord to crush the Servant of the Lord with our sin laid upon Him.

How do we take ahold of this grace? Look at the command in the middle of verse 2, "listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food." The currency that we have in our pockets when we come to God is not money or works, but that of a listening and attentive heart that eats what God commands and delights in it. Faith is believing God's word and trusting them enough to live your life in light of them.

Jen and I like to take walks on our dates. We especially like to get away into the city once a year when its nice and walk and talk and stop and eat at a restaurant along the way. There are certain restaurants as we walk by, we know are out of our league-- we don't even walk up to the menu. As we have walked past one of these high-end restaurants we have never had the owner come rushing out to us and say, "O I am so glad that you are here, come, come-- come in and eat-- I've prepared a feast for you and I've paid the price!"

But that is what God does. Listen, friends, do you understand that God is calling us in, speaking words of grace, his marvelous grace, calling us to a banquet that has already been paid for and bought with the great price of His Son?

We actually can't pay God for his gifts even if we think we have the money. They cannot be bought by money or works or prayers-- but satisfaction comes to the one who hears and delights in what he hears and receives God's gifts. God paid the price-- God speaks Grace to those who listen.

### **God Speaks Promise**

Second, tonight, Listen to the God who Speaks Promise. Promise, singular, not promises. Surely he does speak promises to us in His Word, even here in this passage, but what I want us to specifically see here is His promise to David. Look at the end of verse 3 and into verses 4, 5. "I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David."

The promise from God that is being referred to is the promise from God in 1 Sam 7:16 "Your throne shall be established forever." On the basis of this covenant with David, God will make an everlasting covenant- the new covenant. The promise from God that he

would put his law within his people and write it upon their hearts that we see in Jeremiah 31 and 32. A promise that would see its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus and in His work. Jesus himself stood up in the temple and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the Spirit who had not yet been given." John 7:37-39

So the promise to the thirsty is that they will find ultimate satisfaction in God's new covenant with them when the descendent of David comes and brings forth the Spirit of God who will live within them and write his laws upon their hearts. Jesus is the ultimate living water that will quench their thirsty souls. Jesus is the servant who is glorified in His Work. Jesus is the servant who suffered and paid the price to redeem us.

Look with me at verse 5. The "you" here is speaking about the descendent of David- We know this because the you here is singular, as opposed to the plural that came before it in v 3. The glory of God, seen in the face of Jesus is a light in Israel that will draw men from all nations. We know Him through His Word-- Jesus prayed in the garden, "And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." (Jn 17:5)

Now think about when the Israelites would have first read this promise. The promise of comfort, of a servant who will have the iniquity of us all put on Him, of a new covenant where God will dwell with his people forever-- it was in the darkest days of the history of the people of God. The Jews were in exile! There was no light at the end of that tunnel, from a human perspective.

But we have a God who speaks promise-- and is faithful to fulfill. We stand this side of the cross and we marvel at the goodness and faithfulness of the God of Israel who brought his people back from exile and brought forth a descendent of David who redeemed his people and made a way for us, from all nations to come to Him.

How often were the people of Israel concerned with the here and now and missed how God was patiently doing his work and keeping his promise. How easy it is for us to forget God's promise. Listen, do not turn from God even if you can't see the outcome. God is faithful even if there is no light at the end of the tunnel.

There is a response that is called for when you hear his Word of promise here and it's found in verse 6. The word is repentance. When we hear the Lord speak grace and we hear him speak promise we trust him and turn from our sin and toward him.

V.6 "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon."

Hear that? Are you looking for God? *The Lord may be found. He is near. He will have compassion. He will abundantly pardon.* To the person who claims that they will wait until a better time, there is no better time than today. As the Psalmist writes, "Therefore,

let everyone who is godly offer a prayer to you when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters they shall not reach him." Ps 32:6

Like the old hymn says, *If you tarry, till you're better, you will never come at all.*

## **God Speaks Purpose**

Lastly, tonight, God speaks purpose. The everlasting God speaks purpose into this sin soaked world. Specifically, he speaks His purpose. God has a purpose in *what* he reveals about himself and he has a purpose for what his words *will* accomplish.

Look at what God reveals about himself in verses 8,9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways declares the Lord. For as High as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

God is transcendent- he goes beyond our range to comprehend him fully. This is why I think we should be very careful in how we speak about God and use language that he uses for Himself, not what we think must be true about him. We must continually come back to, What does the Word say about God? Because every word is important.

What we hold in our hands is exactly what God wants us to know about Him. Do you want to get to know God? Get to know the Word of God. Do you want to get to know what God's will is for you? Seek wisdom in His Word

So we know God is purposeful in what he reveals about himself, look to verses 10 and 11 with me as to the purpose of His Words, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

Theologian John Frame argues, "Scripture cannot be understood unless it is being obeyed, and it cannot be obeyed except in the concrete situation. Therefore, theology is application." (From Redeemer Church Planting Manual)

Here's what this means: truth in God's Word is not ever meant to stay theoretical head knowledge. God has a purpose for what His Word will accomplish in your life. Just as rain and snow water the earth and accomplish a purpose. The Word has a purpose in your life--It must be obeyed, In order to be obeyed it must be understood and applied in your life. For example, take the command, "you shall have no other God's before me." The only way this command can be obeyed is by doing what it says. You can't have a heart or closet full of idols and say you only believe their is One God-- it doesn't work.

Or maybe let's bring it home to what we are speaking of tonight-- it is not enough to merely believe that God Speaks, or even that He speaks through His Word. You need to take it up and read for yourself. You need to hear him speaking personally.

God's Word is successful in accomplishing God's purpose-- look at the end of verse 11 again: "it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

Now in the context, the one who is watered by the word is going to have life-- the purpose of the Word is to give life! We see this in the following verses, 12,13-joy and peace and singing accompany the life that springs from death-- instead of a thorn, a cyprus, instead of a briar, a myrtle. Just like Psalm 1, blessed is the man that is planted by streams of water-- whose roots go down deep and are nourished by the Word.

The great confidence for the preacher is that God accomplishes his purposes. When I prepare and study and pray I do not know all the plans that God has for his Word when it is preached-- Maybe for some here it is an encouragement to read God's Word for yourself regularly. Maybe for others it is to trust God's Word. To others maybe you are just beginning to investigate whether this is God's Word-- I don't know all His plans, but I know he has a purpose for it, and I know it will accomplish what he wants it to accomplish and I know the purpose of His Word is to speak grace and promise and life to those in a sinful world.

One application we would do well to lay hold of at the beginning of a church, like we are in now--this should apply for us all when we talk to one another and when we fellowship around the Word of God-- shouldn't the fact that God's Word will not return to Him empty give us encouragement to speak the Word to one another often? Listen, I need you to speak the Word to me and remind me-- you need others to speak the Word to you. We all need the Word because we all so easily forget. Paul tells us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly and to teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. There should be a connection between His Word and our Words.

## **Conclusion**

We know a God who is not silent. In fact, the only reason we know him is precisely because he was not silent but speaks to us in His Word.

As Hope Fellowship, we want to be about the Word of God-- because the Word tells us all about His Son who is our redeemer. We learn about our gracious, promise making, purposeful God and we treasure Him. We want the Word to inform us as a gathered group of Christians meeting here in the Lombard / Villa Park and Elmhurst areas so that we might obey him and might be marked by joy and singing and peace and love.

If you flip over your bulletin you'll see a mission statement for us as a church, "Hope Fellowship seeks to joyfully proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to ourselves, our neighbors and the world by the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God." That we might proclaim the gospel, the good news of Jesus that we know from His Word to ourselves first, our neighbors and the world for the glory of God!