

Date: Sunday March 7, 2010

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9

Title: “Come and Get It”

The Message of Scripture (Sermon Thesis): God is giving away the gifts of life.

The Sharing of the Good News (The Sermon Purpose): When we’re hungry and thirsty, God offers bread and the cup. At this very table, God gives grace to the ambitious, rest to the weary, comfort to the hurting, peace and joy to us all.

(Remember, it’s all about God!)

Most of us are ready for baseball (show necktie). Even for those who aren’t baseball fans, and that’s hard to believe that someone wouldn’t be a baseball fan, but that’s OK, everyone is welcome here, even for those who aren’t, I’m sure everyone is ready for baseball this year because it means spring! And we are all ready for spring. As I have been spring dreaming, I have found myself thinking about sights and sounds of the ballpark; the crack of the bat; the ball hitting the glove; the cheers of the fans and the yell of the vendors. That’s right. The vendors hawking their goods at the ball yard is as much the fabric of the game as the calls of the umpires or the arguments of the managers. Just hearing, “Peanuts, peanuts, who wants peanuts?” or “Ice cold lemonade!” or my favorite from Kauffman stadium, “Come on you people, buy this stuff,” indicates that it is a good day.

Well, the vendor in Isaiah 55 this morning has a product that lives up to its billing. This passage begins with a street corner vendor shouting “Ho,” for which we may need a new translation in the 21st Century, but for the people of the ancient

time the translation was “get ’em right here.” With running water as close as the nearest faucet, we don’t need water vendors. But in Palestine, water was precious and expensive, a commodity bought and sold in the street.

But this vendor isn’t *selling* water. This vender is God and God is giving it away. “Come, everyone who’s thirsty—here’s water! Come, you that have no money—buy grain and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk—it costs you nothing! Come! Drink your fill! It’s free!” Those who heard were astounded and understandably so. As a former marketing guy in the grocery industry I can assure you that no grocery store has ever used this slogan in their print ads: “And you who have no money, come get wine and milk, no charge.” Then and now, what an incredible offer.

We have all gotten phone calls and emails that begin with, “Hi. We’d like to give you a subscription to *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated*, or *People*.”

We either don’t respond, or respond something like, “Thank you. I’m not interested.”

“We’d like to send you on an all-expenses paid trip to the Bahamas.”

“Thank you. I’m not interested.”

“We’d like to give you a year’s supply of hot dogs.”

“Thank you. I’m not interested.”

We know nothing is free except Food 4 Kids lunch. We may like *Newsweek*

and the Bahamas and sometimes a hot dog hits the spot, but if we need it, we'll get it for ourselves.

That's what makes it hard for us to accept that our deepest need is one that we can't take care of on our own. This hymn in Isaiah is for people who are hungry and thirsty for joy and hope, who are tired and need rest, who aren't satisfied with their lives, who recognize that they need something that they can't create, something to think, something to love, something that's fulfilling.

The Israelites were missing something important. They are a conquered nation in exile. Their enemies destroyed the temple. One commentator put it, "The Hebrew people don't even know where God's dining room is—much less whether there's food on the table." They are far away from home living with strange people with unusual beliefs. Something is definitely missing.

None of us like to confess the emptiness we feel, to admit that left to our own devices, our own devices aren't enough. We do our best to fill up our lives. We work for the promotion that promises success. We look for the spouse who'll make everything right. We plan to lose ten pounds by walking every day. We'll fill our schedules with time management activities, but at the end of the day it's not what we've imagined. We drink from the fountains at which we wait in line and still come away with parched throats. We hunger to be known, heard, and understood. We long to be loved. We desperately want peace inside our own skin. But something is missing (Younger).

Brett Younger writes that the Israelites had to decide what to do with their deepest desires. They had been in captivity for fifty years, but the Babylonians treated them well. They allowed them to buy property and engage in business. The Israelites had been successful. Now King Cyrus told them that they could go home. He knew they wouldn't. They didn't want to leave what they had or what they had gotten used to. They didn't miss the home they'd never known. Though the king said they were free to go they were captive to a way of life. They knew it wasn't who they were meant to be, but it was what they knew. They realized that they weren't really at home, but they had given up on ever really being at home anywhere.

We keep working for the day when we feel completely at home, but we recognize that the fulfillment we can create with our own hands is temporary at best. Some of the people who have the job we think would make us complete, or the family that's almost perfect, or the success we want, or the life we want, those folks still know emptiness inside. I have a good buddy who has achieved his career goal of working his way up with a company in his hometown. After twenty years he has gotten to be a VP, flies on the corporate plane, and entertains clients at high profile events. He recently wrote to me and said, "My life is crazy. I hope yours is settled and calm." I had a seminary professor who said he thought at the age of forty that he would feel settled, but did not. The Israelites sang, "Why do we spend money for what is not bread, and wages for what does not satisfy? Why do we work for what doesn't matter?"

Today is the Third Sunday in Lent—the season given to honesty about our longings and about God’s peace. All who are weary come home to God. All who are thirsty come to the waters. All who hungry, eat what is good. Give up the security of a foreign land for the glorious journey home.

Most of the Israelites decided to stay in Babylon. They wouldn’t part with what they had or who they had become. But a few decided that God’s offer was too good to refuse. They went home and rebuilt the temple and sang this hymn giving thanks for God’s grace.

In Horton Foote’s play, *The Trip to Bountiful*, an elderly widow recognizes that she will die soon. Mrs. Watts lives with her son and daughter-in-law in a small apartment in Houston. Her heart’s desire is to return to her hometown, Bountiful, one more time. She ends up stuck in a bus station twelve miles from Bountiful waiting for morning to come, hoping that someone will take her the rest of the way. She’s happy just to be this close to home. She says: “Why is it that on some days everything goes right, and on other days, nothing goes right? I guess the Lord’s just with me today.” She continues, “I wonder why the Lord’s not with us every day. Well, maybe then we wouldn’t appreciate it so much those days when God is with us. Or maybe, God’s with us always, and we just don’t know it. Maybe I had to wait twenty years cooped up in the city before I could appreciate going home.”

We all long to go home, to always feel the grace of God. Deep down we know that it’s when we find our home in God’s grace that we’ll find peace with who we are. It’s in God’s grace that we’ll learn how to live in the world that makes us

long for home in the first place (Younger). The Lord is with us every day. When we're hungry and thirsty, God offers bread and the cup. At this very table, God gives grace to the ambitious, rest to the weary, comfort to the hurting, peace and joy to us all. And that's today's good news about God. Yes my friends, as the vendor would say, "Come and get this stuff," for it is from God, it is filling, and it is free. Whenever we hear those words, it is a good day. Let us pray.

Lord,

We give our thanks for all your gifts, these we are about to receive, those we have received, and the ones placed upon us right now. Because of your gifts freely given to us, we will live our lives sharing your goodness freely with others. This we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Offering: One more time, what we are unable to buy, God freely gives. Our offering is one way we say thanks. The ushers will please . . .

Dedication: Accept and bless this offering which we can use to share your good news with those that have heard and need to hear again or for those that have not heard. So we give and pray. Amen.

Benediction: We are led this day, this Lenten journey, and our whole lives by God. Go forth, blessed by this One who leads, gives, and loves. Go forth.

Sources:

Younger, Brett; Lectionary Homiletics; www.goodpreacher.com; 2010.

Holy Bible – New Revised Standard Version; Harper Bibles: San Francisco; 2007.

