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<sup>A</sup> Genesis 6:5, Psalm 19:9

<sup>B</sup> Matthew 15:18-19, Jeremiah 29:11

<sup>C</sup> Psalm 147:15-18

<sup>D</sup> 1 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21, Romans 1:16-17

<sup>E</sup> Psalm 126

<sup>F</sup> Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:18-22

A. Introduction

1. the background of Isaiah 55

- a. is the coming exile of the people of Judah in Babylon
- b. and the words of comfort from God in Isaiah 40-66 that the exile would not be permanent; the Jews would return
- c. but in these chapters, another message is never far from the surface – often it is the surface –
  - (A) God has a greater deliverance than that from Babylon
  - (B) a spiritual deliverance, salvation, which is revealed in Isaiah 53, and further described in the following chapters
  - (C) salvation, as we pointed out last week from the first part of the chapter, including the Gentiles into God’s people

2. ‘Isaiah, the Evangelical Prophet’ is my title for this series

- a. because Isaiah prophesies the gospel of Jesus Christ
- b. this chapter is a gospel word; a message of good news

B. A Word of Invitation. . . . . 55:6-7

1. A Pressing Invitation – verse 6 – **Seek the Lord while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near.**

- a. the commands
  - (A) first, we are invited to seek God – it is not that God is lost! the root ideas is that we take steps towards God, that we consult Him instead of relying on ourselves
  - (B) then, we are to call upon him – the cry of trust, that recognizes our dependence upon God for all things
- b. the considerations that make this a pressing invitation
  - (A) is that in this day, and at this time, He may be found – this is a day of grace – it is God who is now giving permission that He may be found
  - (B) the same thought is conveyed in that He is near – the opportunity is being presented for us to call

upon Him

2. A Transforming Invitation – verse 7 – Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

a. The transformation of repentance

- (A) what is described here is exactly the NT conversion
- (B) it involves a 180° change of direction
- (C) it is the turning away from our old life
- (D) it is the turning to a new life found in Jesus Christ

b. The transformation of forgiveness comes from

- (A) the removal of our guilt and the cleansing of our being
- (B) the becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus
- (C) and is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit

3. the gospel word which changes life must not to be ignored

C. A Word that Is Different . . . . . 55:8-9

1. Different in Nature – verse 8 – 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord.

a. Different in their source

- (A) the thoughts of fallen mankind are described in Genesis 6:5, 'Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.' and the evidence is all around us that this has not changed
- (B) but the thoughts of God are described, for example, in Psalm 19:9, '... The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.'
- (C) so man's words are a result of his wicked thoughts, while God's are the outcome of His total righteousness

b. Different in their practical effect

- (A) as the thoughts give voice to the words, so the words lead to the actions: so Jesus taught in Matthew 15:18-19 – ‘But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.’
  - (B) while on the other hand, consider Jeremiah 29:11, ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’
2. Different in Quality – verse 9 – ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.’
- a. the thoughts and words of the natural man are like his natural body: it ‘is of the earth, earthy’ (1 Corinthians 15:47)
    - (A) man’s outlook is limited by his horizon and scope
    - (B) he can see only so far, being limited by time and space
    - (C) and so his ways – how he conducts his life which is in accordance with his ideas – are likewise limited
  - b. but God is eternal, exalted – seeing every part of the universe that He has created; seeing the end from the beginning
  - c. the quality of God the Creator’s thoughts and ways differs immeasurably from that of His creature, man
3. that difference is demonstrated in how man receives the gospel word – turn to 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, ‘18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.” 20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.’

- D. A Word of Power . . . . . 55:10-11
1. The Power Illustrated – verse 10 – ‘For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;’
    - a. God ordained a natural power for a natural purpose – Psalm 147:15-18, ‘He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes. He casts forth His ice as fragments; Who can stand before His cold? He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.’
    - b. God’s providence is exercised for the benefit of His creation
  
  2. The Power Effected – verse 11 – ‘So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.’
    - a. we say that the Bible is the written word of God
      - (A) this is true, because 1 Timothy 3:16 says ‘... all Scripture is given by inspiration ...’ and 2 Peter 1:21, of prophecy says, ‘men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.’
      - (B) so God the Holy Spirit is the Author of the Bible
      - (C) but the Bible’s own term for itself is ‘the Scriptures’ – that is ‘the writings’
    - b. however, while in the Bible the various phrases such as ‘the word of God’ or ‘the word of the Lord’ or ‘my word’ may be speaking generally of God’s revelation to man, the Bible
      - (A) you should study their use in the Bible in their context
      - (B) Dr Donald A Carson has said quite rightly, ‘A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text.’ – i.e., for an opinion
      - (C) such a study reveals that sometimes these phrases are used to emphasize God’s word of judgement, or His word of creation, or His word of command or promise; or as here, the gospel, which is the word of God.
    - c. Franz Delitzsch has made a beautiful comment upon these two verses: ‘As snow and rain are the mediating causes of growth, and therefore the enjoyment of what is reaped; so is the soil of the human heart softened, refreshed, and rendered productive or prolific by the word out of the mouth of Jehovah;

and this word furnishes ... the seed which (the sower) scatters, and brings with it bread which feeds the souls: for every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is bread.<sup>-{2}.</sup>'

d. the parallel to Jesus' parable of the sower is obvious

3. this gospel word is powerful: Romans 1:16-17, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "but the righteous man shall live by faith."'

E. A Word of Promise . . . . . 55:12-13

1. A Joyful Promise – verse 12 – 'For you will go out with joy And be led forth with peace; The mountains and the hills will break forth into shouts of joy before you, And all the trees of the field will clap their hands.'

a. in a poetic way this was the case for the returning exiles from the land of Babylon, so that they sang Psalm 126, 'When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter And our tongue with joyful shouting; Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us; We are glad. Restore our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South. Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting. He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed, Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.'

b. do you see Isaiah's words in the Psalmist's song?

c. and we, too, experience that same joy, look forward to

2. An Eternal Promise – verse 13 – 'Instead of the thorn bush the cypress will come up, And instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up, And it will be a memorial to the Lord, For an everlasting sign which will not be cut off.'

a. sin changed this creation, Genesis 3:17-19, 'Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your

face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.””

- b. in the final end, salvation will restore it, Romans 8:18-22, 'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.'

## F. Conclusion

- 1. this is God's gospel word, His word of good news
  - a. do not neglect to pay attention to it – it is important
  - b. do not disdain it – it is the wisdom of God
  - c. do not underrate it – it is powerful to salvation
  - d. do not forget it – it leads to life everlasting
- 2. take this gospel word
  - a. take it first for yourself, to joy yourself in it
  - b. take it to your family, friends and all that they may live
  - c. a message to tell to people, to all people, to the nations!

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| AV   | Authorized (King James) Version  |
| NAS  | New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition) |
| NIV  | New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society                          |
| NKJV | New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers                                 |

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan  
Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;
- EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans; if you have only one commentary on Isaiah, this should be it; Motyer is an excellent accompaniment.
- K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch
- Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com).

## 2. K&D, *in loc*