

SEEK THE LORD WHILE HE MAY BE FOUND

ISAIAH 55

Text: Isaiah 55:6-9

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⁶ 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. ⁸ For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹ For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Introduction:

Imagine that you only have one hour in which you could pray. Now, I'm not talking about the length of one prayer at a time—you literally had just one hour left in your entire life to seek the face of God. If that were the case, only one hour to seek the Lord, would you squander that hour, waste it with thoughtless mutterings? Or would you treasure that hour of time, making certain everything you've always wanted to say to the Lord would get said.

The truth is most of us in this room today will have much more than one hour to seek the Lord. In fact, we will have a lifetime available (or so we think). And it

seems to me a shame that when we have all of this time available, when we can seek God whenever we are ready, we give little thought to prayer; we don't pray whenever we can.

God spoke through his prophet, Isaiah, to the people of Judah who were enslaved during the Babylonian captivity. The time had come for the people to return home, but they were hesitant. Perhaps they were afraid of what they might find. Perhaps they were afraid that after seventy years of captivity, they wouldn't know how to be free anymore. Perhaps they were afraid that God would not really help them. So, instead of moving ahead in faith, they hesitated. The words spoken by Isaiah years before would encourage them to trust in God. The message of our text this morning spoke to the fearful hearts of the people of Judah. The words rang loud and clear—the people of Judah were to seek God in order to find their way home.

We too have a frightening journey ahead of us as well. It is the journey called life. Ahead of us may be great joy; but, there may also be great disaster. Out there are countless possibilities of joy and happiness, fulfillment and peace. Out there are also countless possibilities of sorrow and pain, frustration and trouble.

I say this, not to depress or discourage you. I say this to remind you that if we are to “find our way” in this world, like Judah, we must learn to seek the Lord.

Why is this so important? Why must we seek God’s direction? Why must we give our hearts to God? Consider these lessons found in the prophet Isaiah’s words.

1. THERE IS A TIME TO SEEK THE LORD (VS. 6)

Isaiah 55:6

⁶Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

A. It was a dangerous thing for Judah to think God was at her beck and call.

1. Isaiah words, “seek the Lord while he may be found,” stressed the urgency of the time of decision.

2. God was ready for the people to seek Him, to follow him right then—if they refused, they might not get another chance.

B. Procrastinating on the decision to seek God, to turn to him is a dangerous thing.

1. When God is prompting your heart the opportunity for response must be seized at once!

2. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians and reminded them that:

2 Corinthians 6:2

²(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)

C. Do not presume that you will always have the ear of the Lord—seek his face now, while there is still time.

Illustration:

The story is told of an unbeliever who, even in death, tried to mock God. It seems that he willed his farm to the devil. The court which oversaw the estate gave months of deliberation to the matter, and came to this decision: “It is decided that the best way to carry out the wish of the deceased is to allow the farm to grow weeds, the soil to erode, and the house and barn to rot. In our opinion, the best way to leave something to the devil is to do nothing.”

1. There is the truth, my friends—few of us would ever admit to such a willful arrogance as the unbeliever, but many will

procrastinate and postpone the great decisions in life and end up willing our lives to the devil.

2. There is a time to seek the Lord and that time is now!

2. THERE IS A WAY TO SEEK THE LORD (vs. 7)

Isaiah 55:7

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.

A. Isaiah told his people that they must come to the Lord in repentance.

1. They were to turn away from their lives of selfish motivations and sin.

2. They were to actively turn their lives over into the hands of the living God.

B. The message Isaiah spoke was not limited to his ministry.

Someone has pointed out:

Noah's message from the steps going up to the Ark was not, "Something good is going to happen to you!"

Amos was not confronted by the high priest of Israel for proclaiming, “Confession is possession.”

Jeremiah was not put into the pit for preaching, “I’m OK, you’re OK!”

Daniel was not put into the lion’s den for telling people, “Possibility thinking will move mountains!”

John the Baptist was not forced to preach in the wilderness and eventually beheaded because he preached, “Smile, God loves you!”

Instead, what was the message of all these men of God? Simple, one word: “Repent!”

C. The way of repentance, of turning from our sin to a holy God, is a way pleasing to the Lord.

1. He desires our fellowship—he wants us to know his love.
2. But, as long as we walk outside of his will, as long as our own hearts rule our lives, we cannot know His peace, or His purpose.
3. He has provided the means for us to seek and find Him—the Person the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. There is a way to seek the Lord, and that way is with a humble and repentant heart.

3. THERE IS A REASON TO SEEK THE LORD (VS. 8-9)

Isaiah 55:8-9

⁸For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

A. Isaiah let his people know that they would never understand God on their own.

1. God's ways and thoughts simply were not what the people of Judah were capable of doing or thinking.

2. Their lives had been so ruled by sin, that they would never break free from the chains that held them.

B. We need God's help to make it in this world.

1. There simply are too many things to deal with that go beyond our understanding, beyond our capabilities.

2. We cannot know the future, we cannot foresee what paths life may take us.

3. We cannot be “good enough,” “wise enough,” “caring enough,” to please a Holy and Perfect God.

C. Without God’s forgiveness, without his grace, we will simply flounder in our efforts.

1. The source of our strength as believers lies in God’s grace.

2. We live victoriously not through self-exertion, or will power, or any self-effort.

3. We live victoriously only when our lives are in the hands of God—only as we actively “seek the Lord.”

4. There is a reason to seek the Lord—we can’t succeed in this life without Him.

Close:

We have so much to be grateful for in our lives. The fact that God allows us to seek Him, to call to Him is a great gift in itself. The fact that He wants us to seek Him and call upon His name is even a more amazing gift. So, let us not be negligent in coming to the One

Who has offered us these gifts. We know today when we ought to seek Him: right now! We know today how we ought to come to Him: in repentance, with humility. We know why to come to Him: we need Him desperately.

Let's seek the Lord while he may be found." Let's call to Him, while there is still time.