

The Great Invitation **Isaiah 55: 1 – 5**

Our sermon text this morning will be Isaiah 55, verses 1 to 5. We'll pray before we read that. So please join me in prayer.

Our Father in heaven, as we now sit under your word, I pray, Father, you would help me as I speak. I pray you would help us all as we listen. May we be given ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts that understand and obey. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Isaiah 55, starting our reading at verse 1. We'll read right through to the end of the chapter, though this morning we will not get that far in our teaching. We'll look this morning at verses 1 to 5. Isaiah 55, reading the whole chapter:

¹“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. ²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. ⁴Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

⁶“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷let 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. ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares 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.

¹⁰“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, ¹¹so 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.

¹²“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. ¹³Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Amen.

I think everybody in the world has a desire for something that is genuine, for something that is deep, for something that they can build upon, for something that they can rely on. Everybody has that desire.

But the world turns us aside and turns us away. Everyone wants to get hold of something that is reality. Everyone wants to have things that are authentic. Everybody wants to build their life upon something that they think is forever.

When you don't have God as your foundation, when you don't have an eternity with God as that for which you strive, as that for what you seek, as that for which you hope—when all you can see is this world around us and the people around us, people look for reality. They look for this foundational thought in all the wrong places. They look for it in all the wrong things.

Have you noticed that all of the worldly entertainment and communication that comes our way, it seems as though the highest possible thing to which a person can attain is to be deeply in love, to have a love for somebody that is reciprocated and that just can't be broken. It's special. It binds you together. It separates you from the world around you.

But though we may well indeed have a true love for the partner that God has given us, even in the church—our wives, our husbands—you can't build your life on a person. You can't build your life on just something or somebody that is not God. Everybody wants this incredibly deep and wonderful love. They want this incredibly deep and real relationship, but they can't get it. They can't make it. They can't find it. They can't build it.

They talk about love, and they talk about commitment, but what they're really talking about is, as long as my desire for pleasure matches your desire for pleasure, we can walk side by side. And I don't just mean sensual pleasure. I know that there is a pleasure in people loving one another and relating to one another, but it's not the thing for which mankind was created; it's a subordinate thing. It's a thing that comes under our relationship with God. The world around us claims to be desperately interested in the truth, in reality, desperately interested in something that's authentic.

About the worst criticism that can be made of someone in our society today is, "He or she is a faker, a pretender. They want you to think that they're something they're not. They're not authentic." Everyone wants this thing that is genuine. They say they want genuine, but then they deny any genuine goodness, any genuine transcendent righteousness, holiness, anything that's actually truly worthy of worship. They say they want it, but they blind themselves to what they say they want.

You deny the Creator who created, you deny His very goodness, His very nature, and you're never going to get anything else right. It's just a fact. It's the way things are. It's the way things are meant to be.

And so, I notice that in many TV shows and much of the entertainment that comes our way, what's supposedly reality now is something terribly gritty and dirty, and genuinely unpleasant. Apparently, the way you're supposed to live now, the best thing you can do for happiness is to find somebody you love, you love them, and you live this difficult, tough, hard, life, but you're faithful to the person you love, and there's no real hope, and there's no real joy. All there is is just this life, from one day to the next.

Have you noticed, so many stories that we read or that we watch in movies now, they don't actually come to a conclusion. Now it's not just because what they want to do is they want to set up an ongoing series. But the ongoing series never comes to a conclusion either. Nothing comes to a fulfillment. Nothing comes to a conclusion. Nothing comes to any kind of climatic ending.

It's just life, one day to the next—just keep living. Just keep living, keep fighting, and when the fight's over, die.

And then you do also get a lot of people who are convinced that if you want anything good, if you want any kind of eternal hope, what you've got to do is you've got to labor and you've got to struggle. I'm fairly confident that if we could actually get some people in this world to talk to us—because, you know, that's the incredible hard thing about being Christians in Australia at the moment and having the good news that you want to share. All right, it's not that we're being insulted left, right, and center—it's that we are just given the cold shoulder. We're utterly ignored. We're seen as totally irrelevant. You almost can't get the conversation here.

But I'm fairly certain that if asked, and if we *could* get some answers from people, their answer would be that Christianity is basically trying to live a good life, hoping that at the end, the good works outweigh the bad works, and because God is gracious, because Jesus died on the cross, somehow or other you've got the hope of eternal life—work, work, work, work, work. That's what they think the gospel is. They think the gospel is that Jesus made it possible for us to do the works that earn salvation.

But the gospel is not that at all. There's bad news. We know the bad news. The bad news is that we're greedy, wicked, idolaters; that we're sinners, we're haters of God; that we don't do what we ought to do; that we break God's law left, right, and center; that God is righteously angry concerning sin, that God hates both sin and sinners. That's the truth about humanity. That's the truth about us.

But the gospel is this: God is gracious, God is loving, God is kind. Here's the thing about God. People say they're seeking for that authentic person. God is *the* authentic one. And nothing from God comes in half measure. You know, God's retributive justice is to the full measure. Absolutely retributive justice is to the full measure. His hatred of sin is complete and perfect. His anger is complete and perfect.

But even as *these* things are perfect, His love, His grace, His mercy—these things are *also* perfect. You don't get half-and-half with God. It's not possible. God is not *incomplete*, God *is* complete. You don't get to choose a little bit there or a little bit there. It's not a little bit. With God it's thorough. It's complete.

So, what's the condemnation of sin? It's complete, absolutely complete. No loopholes, no exceptions. It's complete. Each and every sin draws down the judgment of God. Each and every sin is worthy of the punishment of death and eternal punishment. Okay, we are sinners who have sinned against a perfectly good, holy, and righteous God.

But when God pours out His grace and His mercy, when God calls someone to salvation, that is also a 100% calling, an abundant blessing. No one gets half-saved, no one gets a little bit of mercy, no one gets a little bit loved. When God calls, it's a gift. When God saves, it's a gift. God's grace is complete and thorough. There's no half measures about it.

The things that we want, we can't have according to our own works. We just can't get there. The authentic things, that which is real, that which is the true basis for human happiness and life, doesn't come through works. It comes through the grace of God.

Looking at Isaiah 55, verse 1, God says, “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.” Look carefully at what’s being said there. Think of the picture to a people who live in the Middle East in ancient times, where there was no certainty or security of a harvest. You know, we live in such different times to that.

“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters.” God makes a call: “Come. Come.” It’s not a false call. It’s not a pretend “come.” What are they athirst for? Well, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This call is going out to those who know they are sinners. It’s going out to those who know they are separate from God.

Now that’s the whole world. That’s everybody in this world. Scripture doesn’t tell us that there are people in this world who don’t know that there is a God and so they’re sinning in blessed ignorance. Scripture tells us that they all know that there is a God, that they all know there is righteousness, they all know that there are things that they ought to do that are right. Some—some acknowledge their wickedness. But some suppress the knowledge of righteousness. They hold it down, they push it away. Though they know there is a God, they refuse to acknowledge that there is a God.

It’s crazy, you know, an atheist can say something like, “I’m an atheist. I don’t believe in your God, and not only that, I hate Him.” How do you hate something that you don’t actually believe is there? It’s not possible, okay? Who generates hatred of leprechauns or hobbits? Nobody. We don’t take them seriously. They’re interesting, you know, because usually when we hear about them they’ve been written about, and the author does well. But nobody hates them. They’re meaningless to us.

But this call goes out, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!” How can they purchase? They have no money, and yet they’re told to come, to buy, to eat. “Buy wine and milk without money and without price.” What are they laying down, then? If you’re buying, what are they laying down? What are they exchanging for these things?

God asks the question, looking at verse 2: “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.” And I think that there’s the answer. They spend their money for that which is not bread, they labor for that which is not satisfying. What should they be doing? “Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”

When God speaks to humanity, it’s a blessing. When God lets Himself be known through His words, it’s better than food. Come, everyone who thirsts. Come and listen diligently to God. And in listening diligently to God, they’re eating what is good. They’re delighting themselves in rich food. Looking at verse 3: “Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.” Nobody wants to die. Nobody wants to come to the end of this earthly life. Everybody wants eternity. We all know that the soul being parted from the body is not a good thing, and even the people out there in the world know that. Though they pretend that death is a solution to their problems, they know that that’s not true.

“Hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” “An everlasting covenant of steadfast, sure love for David.” What’s Isaiah getting at here? Well, Isaiah wants us now to be thinking about King David.

Turn quickly to Psalm 89, reading verse 1 down to verse 4. It’s entitled, “A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite”: “¹ I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever; with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. ² For I said, ‘Steadfast love will be built up forever; in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.’ ³ You have said, ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: ⁴ “I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.”’” A covenant with His chosen one; a covenant with David, that the offspring of David would be established forever.

If you stay in Psalm 89 and look further forward into the psalm, reading from verse 35: ““Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶ His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. ³⁷ Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.””

Think of this man, King David. We know that he was a sinner. We know that he sinned. We know that he took Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah and that he arranged for the killing of Uriah to cover his own sin. We know that he did wicked things. We know, for example, that he took a census of Israel in his pride, and brought down the judgment of God upon the nation that he was responsible to serve.

Yet we also know that this David was restored. We know that God never truly cast him off. Though he was disciplined for his sins, he was never thrown down. He was never cast away. He was upheld. He wrote for us Psalm 51, for example.

Let’s turn to Psalm 51, including the title: “To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet went to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba: ¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. ⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.”

This is David, the man who took another man’s wife. This is David, the man who killed that other man. He was granted repentance. He was never thrown away. He was never cast off. God’s promises to David stand. Though David is a sinner, though David has done wickedly, God’s promises to David stand. And God’s promises to David started back in Second Samuel chapter 7, where it was promised that David would have an offspring, or a seed, who would rule and who would reign forever.

Turn back to Isaiah 55. Remember in Isaiah 53, The Fourth Servant’s Song, we hear of that suffering servant, the one who makes many to be accounted righteous, the one who suffers on behalf of sinners. Isaiah 54, from last week, told us how the result of the work of the servant

would be that there would be an increase in children, a certain fertility, that there would be the security of an everlasting covenant, that the people would dwell in the presence of God, in the city of God.

Now how do you fill that city? How do you get that increase in children? You get it because the gospel call goes out. “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.”

And in coming, what do you receive? You can’t buy it with money. You’ve got nothing to buy, but you receive this guarantee of eternal life. “And I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.” The gift of God.

You see, David, that sinner, that adulterer, that murderer, that proud fool that numbered the tribes of Israel so that he could boast of his greatness as a king—David had salvation. David was saved, though he suffered, though he sinned, though he angered His God. What did David have with God? He had a promise—the steadfast, sure, love for David; steadfast, covenant-keeping, love—love that doesn’t change.

My friends, when we’re offering the gospel, when we’re saying to the world, “Come!” we’re calling them to eternal life. We’re calling them to a certainty of salvation. The thing that they need is the thing that God is providing.

Let’s read on, verse 4: “Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.”

This gospel that Isaiah has been revealing, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is not a gospel that is for the people of Judah only; it’s a gospel that goes out into all the world. “You shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you.”

Notice, Paul preaching in the synagogue, which we read earlier—turning back there again to Acts chapter 13, Paul preaching at Antioch. He preaches to the people, he preaches to them of God’s dealings with Israel, but then he comes to them and says, looking at verse 32: ““ And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” ³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, “I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.”””

What’s Paul saying there? Well, in Paul’s application of the Scripture, he’s saying that Jesus was raised, as written in the second Psalm, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” What’s he saying? He’s saying that all the things that Jesus said about Himself in His ministry—He’s claimed to be the Son of God, He’s claimed to be one with the Father, He’s claimed to be divine, He’s claimed to be the one through whom all mankind must know God—if they do not know Christ, they do not know the Father. He’s saying all of those claims are vindicated by the fact that God raised Him from the dead.

The proof that Jesus was speaking the truth is that Jesus was resurrected. And this life, this resurrection life, Paul then takes, as I've said from our passage in Isaiah 55, looking at verse 34 of Acts 13, "³⁴ And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'³⁵ Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.'"

What's Paul saying? He's saying that in this salvation, you have eternal life, because Christ was raised from the dead and did not see corruption. You, sinner, are to be raised in Christ. You, sinner, have eternal life. You have the holy and the sure blessings of David.

Turn back to Isaiah 55. The servant secured salvation for all who hear the word of God with faith, and for all who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This is the true food. This is the thing that all humanity searches for. And in their denial of God, they do not find it. You can't find it in a marriage relationship, as good as our marriages are. You can't find it in a family, as good or as strong as our families may be. This is more than a parent's love for their children, or a child's love for their parents. This is the very purpose for which we were created—to be worshipers of the living God, in an eternal relationship with that God.

Just as David had the steadfast sure love of God, that even though he sinned, yet he was granted repentance, God's word to sinners like you and me is, we have that same guarantee. I'm not saying we sin lightly. I'm not saying it means you just do as you please. Psalm 32 speaks of "blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven. Blessed is the one whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."

I'm not saying that you get to deceitfully claim to be a worshiper of God. You don't get to say, "Oh well, Jesus forgives sins. I'm a sinner—sin as I please, I've got nothing to worry about. All I've got to do is say I believe in Jesus and ask for forgiveness every now and then, whenever I think of it." That's not eternal security. That's not Christian faith. That's not the life of Christ within a person. That is self-deception. That is using God to justify evil, and that in itself is a sin which counts against those sinners.

The one whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are forgiven, and against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, it says, "In whose spirit is no deceit." Their spirit is open to God. Their nature is open to God. They're faithful, they're true worshipers. Though this promise of salvation comes to us for free, though this is something that we cannot secure with our own works, yet it's a salvation that transforms us and makes us Christ-like. It changes the very spirit of the person who has come to the feast, the person who has come and entered God's call.

Scripture tells us that the way of the transgressor is hard. It tells us that the way of the sinner is hard. Their life is hard. It's not satisfying. They don't enjoy life. They don't find pleasure in life. They don't find rich food in their life. Their life is shallow, it's painful. The answer, and the only answer, is the Lord Jesus Christ. The only way that a person can be restored is to come to God, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, acknowledging that you have none of your own, and acknowledging that you need the food which God gives you. And you get that food through listening diligently.

We must study the word of God. We must sit under preachers. We must sit under the teaching of the word of God. “Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live.” There are those who will not hear. There are those who, in their sin, will harden their heart and turn away. But by the grace of God, people are called to faith and repentance. The answer is to be found in Christ. Scripture is filled with these calls to faith and repentance. We started the service off reading from Matthew chapter 11: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Let’s have a look at a few more. Turn to John chapter 6, verse 35: “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.’” Stay in the gospel of John. John chapter 7, verse 37: “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”’³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Now move on in your Bibles to the book of Acts, and look at Acts chapter 17. We’ll start at verse 26. Paul speaking: “²⁶ ‘And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,²⁸ for “In him we live and move and have our being.”’” They should seek God, feel their way toward Him, and find Him. “Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.”

Or turn on to the book of Revelation, chapter 22, verse 17: “The Spirit and the Bride,” God’s Spirit, speaking through the bride, which is His church, “say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.” Come. Come to the waters. Come to that which God provides. Come to that which is given, which is without price. Come to the freely given salvation of God.

My friends, when you speak to people about Jesus, do you stress the fact that this grace is freely given? Yes, you’re a sinner. Yes, you’re lost in your wickedness. But this grace is freely given. All you need do is come. All you need do is seek. All you need do is beg God for forgiveness.

The gospel’s not a gospel for righteous people, it’s a gospel for sinners. The salvation that God offers He doesn’t offer to the good in the world, He offers only to sinners. The only people that get called into the church are sinners. The only people that get to share the gospel are sinners. The only people that get to serve God are sinners—there’s no other kind of people on the face of the earth. Our righteousness is as filthy rags. What we think is good about ourselves is just the few things that are less evil than other things. We should have no pride in this. Those who are the most humble sinners of the lot are the ones that should be most willing to receive this word.

It’s all on offer here, my friends. God offers Himself to us, and He offers Himself to any who hear the call that they should come and repent and receive salvation. And I said at the start, you don’t get a little bit of God. You don’t get a little bit of salvation. You don’t get a little bit of grace, a little bit of mercy, a little bit of forgiveness. It’s not conditional. When God sets His heart upon someone, they get God! And God is love. And the love of God is something real.

This is not just an idea, or a concept. This is the basis of all human happiness. The reason that humanity is the way it is, is that we have separated ourselves from God through our sins. We keep throwing up walls and problems and troubles for ourselves. People need to hear the gospel call—“Come! Come! Come, everyone who thirsts. Come. Let the one who is thirsty, come. Let the one who desires take the water of life, without price, salvation.” This is the message of the gospel—it’s the grace of God, the freely given love of God, expressed through Jesus Christ, and by the power of His Holy Spirit.

That which is real, that which humanity seeks, that which humanity needs, is found nowhere else but in God. Forgiveness is found nowhere else but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal life is found nowhere else but through the gospel. That which the servant has accomplished is certain. The salvation that He purchased is certain. The love of God that is revealed through His works is certain. The authentic thing, the real thing people search for is the gospel. It’s the truth.

We really need to be praying. We really need to be a praying people. This sin-darkened, blinded nation, filled with hardened hearts and cold indifference, is evidence of the fact that we as a people have turned our backs upon the living God, that so many churches have failed to preach the truth, so many churches have failed to preach both the good news and the bad news.

My friends, we need to be a prayerful people. There’s no other way to get this message out to the world. We have to pray it, and we have to preach it. We have to speak it. We need God-given opportunity. As long as the people of Australia are happy in their sins, and as long as they’re not asking the questions—and this is what alcohol and drugs and all the other nonsense has done to our nation.

The people won’t even ask the questions. As far as they’re concerned, there’s no question to be asked. They’ve suppressed the knowledge of God to the point where they’ve decided that this life is all there is, the pleasures of this life at this moment are all that there is that’s worth pursuing, pursue them today, blinding themselves, dulling their hearts, fattening their hearts.

The cry of the gospel, empowered by God’s Holy Spirit, is the only thing that can reach into these darkened, hardened hearts. This is the only answer to the needs of humanity. They need something real, they need something authentic, they need some true relationship, they need love—they need all of those things, and it’s only to be found in the gospel. It’s only to be found in Christ.

Isn’t it amazing, the condescension of our God? What do I mean by that? Usually when we say “He’s a condescending sod,” it means you don’t like the person. It means they imagine they’re better than you and they think they’re doing you a great favor by extending friendship to you. That’s what we mean. But in this sense, this condescension of God is a good thing. He is so holy, He is so righteous, He is so far above us, He is so much greater than us—and yet He’s willing to communicate His gospel as a request—“Come! 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.”

He's willing to speak persuasively. "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me." This is God speaking, who has no reason to save anyone, other than the fact that He is love; who has no reason to call anyone, other than the fact that He intends to save. And He condescends to speak to humanity on this level of humanity.

It's a good thing that God condescends to send the gospel out as a request. You know that I'm a Calvinist, you know that I'm Reformed, you know that I'm absolutely convinced that not one person will be saved apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. Yet even so, Scripture tells us that we can plead with sinners, that we can beg people to come into the light, that we can say to people, "Why would you not give your heart to Jesus? How bad does your life have to get before you're willing to do it? How much do you have to keep pressing that same button for the same result, but imagining that one day, somehow or other, you just keep doing exactly the same things again and again and again, but somehow or other, one day, it'll all come right? One day I'll press that button, and hey, presto! suddenly I'll be happy and it'll all happen"?

That's the world. They're like a not very clever monkey that's been trained to press a button to get food, and then one day the zookeeper stops putting the food in the machine, and they just keep pressing the button—"Where is it? Where is it? I've pressed this button a million times before—where is it? Where is it? I keep pressing it!" That's the world. They just keep doing the same things again and again and again.

What are they hoping for? They're hoping that one day, doing that same thing again, finally, finally—it'll actually turn out right, and they'll actually have joy in their lives, and they'll actually have hope, and they'll actually have love, and they'll actually have the certainty of an eternity and all of those good things. And in the meantime, God says, "Come. 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." Stop pressing that button.

You know, that's the insanity of sin. You want to know one of the definitions of insanity? It's doing the same thing, over and over again, expecting a different result. And that's what the world does—the same thing, over and over again, expecting a different result. Broken relationship after broken relationship after broken relationship, hoping that somehow or other, at some time or other, I'm going to meet the person that fills the hole, the person that makes me happy forever and eternity, and we're going to have the relationship that's just magical. And it doesn't happen, and they don't get there. Party after party, drug after drug. They keep pressing that same button—nothing comes their way. That's the insanity of sin.

The circuit-breaker, the thing that breaks the cycle, is the gospel. And it's the only thing that can break the cycle. And if they turn their back on this freely-given grace of God, all they're doing is confirming themselves into a futile life of ongoing insanity—the insanity of sin, a futile life of just following that same pattern again and again and again, till they die. And then they do have an eternity to look forward to, but it's not to be looked forward to if you're the same person for all of eternity, and all that you've ever known is futility and emptiness—all of eternity as a futile, empty person, undergoing the punishment of your sins. That's not a great hope, is it my friends?

But for we who are Christians, what's our hope? Eternal life in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, transformed, made whole, made sinless, unable to sin. We will never again desire the wrong things. Our hearts will be right before God. At this moment, we're in the state that's known as justified. By faith, we who are Christians have been justified. We're accounted righteous. The righteousness of Christ is accredited to us so God can look upon us with favor.

And we who are Christians, we are indwelt by God's Holy Spirit. We're made regenerate. We're empowered, we're enabled. And so we can, through effort, through our ongoing obedience, we can have victory over the wickedness and the sinfulness of our nature. Yet all of us struggle every day. I hope I'm not the only sinner in the room. All of us struggle every day. Every day, temptation comes our way. Every day, our thoughts stray off into areas where we know that they ought not to be. Every day.

My friends, eternal life in the presence of God won't be like that. You won't have a desire that's not right. You won't have a desire that you can't chase after. Why? Because everything about us in that life is in complete submission to God. If you want to do it, it's right, because it came from God. That's what we're looking forward to in all of eternity. Who knows what blessings God has to pour out upon us in that state? Who knows?

But here, now, in this world here now, God condescends to speak to us, and to say, "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." Come to this freely-given salvation that can be found in God, through Christ our Lord. Come, seek forgiveness. Come, seek restoration. Come, seek to be restored, to be a true human being.

You know, Scripture says we have life, and we have it abundantly. That's what people who are not saved don't have. They don't have abundant life. They don't have that great eternal hope. They don't have that foundation for their lives, so they go round and round in that little circle of self-destruction, distracting themselves to death. But God says, "Come." God says, "Come, come everyone who thirsts. Come to Christ. Come receive the living waters of salvation." Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do indeed thank you for your grace. We thank you that you love so much that you are willing to save people like us from our sins. We thank you that you sent your Son the Lord Jesus Christ into the world and that He died for our sins, that He bore the price of our sins upon the cross of Calvary, that He saved us through His works, that He is righteous and pleasing in your sight, and that through faith, we have been counted righteous, as indeed He is righteous, that we may know you and that we may love you, and that you've poured out your Spirit upon your church, that we may obey you and that we may serve you.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your grace and your mercy. We thank you for the gifts that you give us that are beyond compare. We thank you that you break people out of that destructive cycle of death and sin. Lord in heaven, I pray that you would help us to rejoice in this good news. Help us to ever have the good news of the gospel upon our lips, and help us to live in joyful and faithful obedience. We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.