

God's Invitation's In the Bible, Part Four
An Invitation to Find Contentment
Isaiah 55: 1 – 3
November 15, 2009

Last Sunday, we saw where God invited Israel – in Isaiah Chapter One – to come to Him for cleansing. That is a critical invitation, because this world has a way of throwing dirt on us and then offering only more of the same dirt. And God's answer is, "I can clean you up, and give you something totally different from the world."

Today, I want you to see that God calls us to Himself so we can find contentment. I believe God wants us to realize that, if we leave Him out of our life there will be no contentment. Let's read what God invites us to receive from Him (read).

Now, the first thing I realize when I read these verses is this:

God's invitation to find contentment is open to all, but only a few find contentment (Isaiah 55: 1a).

A. God asks all who are thirsty to come and have their thirst quenched at a unique source. How many of you have been physically thirsty at sometime in your life? Pretty much all of us have been thirsty; it is a universal human experience.

B. Have you ever satisfied your thirst with something other than what you were thirsting after.

1. I love A&W Root beer floats, and as a kid I would often crave one of those frosty mugs with root beer, topped with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

2. But if I was unable to get to the fountain store, or lacked the sufficient amount to pay for one, I would settle for something less – like a simple soda from a can – not nearly as satisfying, but it would have to do.

C. I confess that, at times in my life when I have been thirsty for contentment that only God can provide, I have settled for less instead.

D. **Why do only a few find contentment?** Let's look for three clues why that is true for many folks in Isaiah 55: 2 – 3.

1. Because only a few are carefully listening to His instructions even though the invitation is open to all(vs. 2 – 3).

A. In the three verses of our scripture, God tells us four times to listen to Him.

1. That is a gentle way to say, "Most of the time you don't find the contentment I offer because most of the time you are not listening."

B. Obviously, hearing what God is telling us to do is an important part of finding contentment.

C. Let me ask you, "Do you think you listen well?" Here are a couple of questions to help you answer that question:

1. When someone tells you their name, do you remember their name the next time you meet them, or do you have to ask them their name again?

2. If you stop to ask directions, and the instructions require you to make several turns, do you have to ask a second – or third time – so you

can complete your journey?

D. I had to stop and ask follow-up questions of the Lord after I felt called into the vocational ministry; though the sense of calling was never in doubt, I must admit I should have paid closer attention to the details along the way!

C. Solomon, for all his wisdom, could not find contentment because he did not follow God's instruction to marry only within the Jewish nation; his decisions to enter into diplomatic marriages with women from many foreign nations brought misery and unhappiness instead of peace.

2. Because only a few come empty-handed to God (vs. 1 – 2).

A. Ever been invited to an evening's festivities, such as a wedding reception or anniversary celebration, but because of financial hardship preventing your buying a gift for the person/s being honored, you quietly excused yourself early.

1. That is a commonly-held philosophy – we all want to avoid imposing on someone's hospitality.

B. But if you apply that kind of thinking to your relationship with God, you have a serious problem.

1. You see, when you approach God, He wants you to come with empty, open hands – no preconceived ideas about what how you think you can find contentment, or about how you might be of the most service to Him.

C. God wants you to come with an empty slate, so He can use you as He sees fit.

1. And it is in the process of God using you that you find contentment.

2. Saul of Tarsus found contentment after the experience on the Damascus Road that emptied him of everything; it even led to his name being changed to Paul and set him from persecutor of Christians to a defender of the faith.

3. Eventually Paul would write this benediction on his life serving God in hard, dangerous, deadly places: "*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am*" (Philippians 4: 11).

4. How could this be? He was content because he came as an empty slate to be used by God.

3. Because only a few realize how valuable we are to God (v. 2).

A. When people value us, they will show it by the ways they make special allowances for us to spend time with them.

1. I always knew my grandmother loved her grandchildren, because when we came to her house she always had special dishes prepared, dishes of such wonderful taste and quality I would not have to eat anywhere else on the planet. My favorite every August was her special rhubarb pie picked from her garden and fixed fresh that very day. M-m-m good!

2. But it was a two-way street; if any of the Wilkerson grandchildren decided they had more important things to do on those days we were scheduled to go to Grandma's, that was their loss. There would be no pie

sent home to them!

B. If I really thought I was as valuable to God as I really am, then I would be willing to spend a lot more time with Him than I do.

1. Isn't it ironic that God prepares the richest of fare for us, and as often as not we fail to show up.

2. Jesus even told a parable about people who were invited to a feast celebrating the wedding of the son of a king, but many simply made excuses until the king had to go out into the streets and alleys to fill out the guest list! How frustrating that must have been.

3. How sad that God the Father spares no expense to pour out His love and care on us, and we stand Him up by our thoughtlessness and careless attitude.

C. I believe that is indicative of a lack of understanding on our part just how deep God's love is for us, and how much He wants to share with His children.

A wise woman who was traveling in the mountains found a precious stone in a stream. The next day she met another traveler who was hungry, and the wise woman opened her bag to share her food. The man saw the precious stone, and asked the woman for it. She did so without hesitation. The traveler left rejoicing in his good fortune, for he knew the stone was valuable enough to give him security for a lifetime.

He returned a few days later and returned the stone to the woman. "I've been thinking," he said. "I know how valuable this stone is, and I was struck by how quickly and willingly you gave it to me. I want to give it back, in the hope you can then give me something even more precious. Give me what you have within you that enabled you to give me this stone."

"Then I give you a portion of my joy," the wise woman said. "That is the true contentment in my heart. I don't need riches to give me joy, for it is in my heart."

What about you? Do you have true contentment today?

Let's pray!