

SERMON – PASTOR GREG
20/03/2022

3rd Sunday in Lent. **Isaiah 55:1-9**. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. What will it take for our church to grow? What will it take for all those who have been baptised and confirmed in this church to return? Multiple modern services? Paid church workers? COVID? What about a war? What does God have to do to grab the attention of the world? His people of old- Israel, had likewise turned away from the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY. Going their own way and making their own gods. Despite so many warnings from the prophets, the people of God refused to repent and turn back to Him. So Babylon was sent to destroy God's people, God's Temple, God's nation. But a remnant remained. Sent into Exile. They thought that God had abandoned them but never will God forsake the covenants He made with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham and with David. So He sent Isaiah to His people.

IT IS FREE! LISTEN AND EAT AND LIVE! *Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live.*

If you are safe on dry land, then the local surf lifesaver is of no use to you. A different story if you are drowning! If you are not thirsty then a glass of water holds little interest. But again if you have been working out in the hot sun without any fluid of hours on end- that glass of water is like gold. Unless a person recognises their sin, a sin-deliverer means nothing. So many well intentioned church mission and evangelism fail to name sin and call sinners to repentance.

There is another wonderful message in these words as well. *You who have no money- come buy and eat!* How can we buy anything if we have no money? What-do we have to work it off somehow? Do we have to pay it back with interest? Eph 2:8: *For it is by grace you have been saved- and this not from yourselves- it is the gift of God.* God's grace is always free- that what grace is- free and available for all.

Think of all the money you spend on trying to find satisfaction and pleasure. Is it worth it? The devil tempted Jesus saying *If you are the Son of God tell these stones to become bread.* Jesus replied, *"It is written: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"*. Strange but true. We eat by listening. Food goes into our bodies to sustain and grow our bodies- of course we need such food. Btu we need other food- we need the Bread of Life (John 6:48). And the Bread comes through hearing the word of God. And the Holy Sacrament of Holy Communion. Through this holy word of God, we receive faith and life and our faith and eternal life is nourished and strengthened as we continually hear God's word.

DAVID TO JESUS TO THE CHURCH. *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendour."*

Despite their sin, God would not and cannot give up on His people. He has covenanted Himself to the descendants of Adam, Abraham and David. In the previous words, Isaiah is speaking of David.

But he is also foreshadowing the greatest and last King- Jesus the Christ. And from Jesus to His Church- you and me. We are the people who are to witness to God- to His terrifying wrath and His amazing grace.

TODAY IS THE DAY OF SALVATION. REPENT AND LIVE. *Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Today God calls all people to acknowledge their sin, to change their ways and to put their trust in His Son. Today, in His forbearance, God keeps His righteous anger at bay. He continues to allow us to go our own way and suffer the consequences. But He does limit it. Pol Pot is no more. Stalin is no more. Idi Amin is no more. Unjust rulers and governments are always brought to an end. Still today, God's grace is available to all. But a time will come when no more! God will finally bring an end to this vale of tears. And woe to any who have not sought out the Lord Jesus Christ for help and pardon.

TRUST IN GOD. *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

How many times do I return to this text to seek comfort and hope? Here, God reminds me that He is the Potter and I am the clay. He is the Creator and I- while deeply loved- am still just His creation. Many times I don't understand His ways but I trust Him. I trust His word. I trust His love. I trust His Son. And all this is still a gift- the gift of the Holy Spirit. Freely we have received. The Water of Life has washed us clean in our baptism and the Bread of Life continues to sustain us. And the Blood of Christ has cleansed us from all our sins.

Let us continue to feed on God's word by listening and trusting in His Word- the Word that became flesh and made his dwelling among us- full of grace and truth. To God be the glory- great things He has done! Amen.