

Isaiah 55:1-3

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- [0 : 0 0] I want you to check out this invitation that I got this week, and I'm holding it up here.
- For the benefit of those who are listening online and aren't seeing it, I am now holding up an envelope, okay? Now, even before I opened the envelope, I was thinking, hello, this looks interesting.
- And it's directed to me. It's pretty obvious. It wouldn't have arrived at the house. Well, I suppose it could have arrived to somebody else who resides at 45 Quadri Road.
- But no, it's directed to me. And in the bottom right-hand corner, now you can't see this, but in the bottom right-hand corner it says, your exclusive invitation.
- So this isn't just any kind of invitation. This is an exclusive invitation to me, okay? Even the envelope, now that may seem a small detail, but as I opened it, I noticed that this is a premium business envelope.
- [1 : 0 7] So it's not any cheap rubbish. So this has arrived at the house today. But what is it? Well, it's an invitation. No, sorry.
- It's an exclusive invitation. And it's an exclusive invitation to a preview event of the new Porsche Cayenne. That's right.
- David McPherson. Five doors that are open to any adventure, if you didn't know that. Now, why me? Why did I get this invitation?
- Well, I guess I'm just special. Or maybe it's because I'm 52 and subject to a midlife crisis that requires some Porsche therapy.
- Or maybe it's because I live in a five-bedroom house in Cults that would suggest a higher income than I actually enjoy. I suspect the postcode has more to do with this invitation than anything else.
- [2 : 0 7] But there you go. Now, this is an invitation that brought a smile to my face, but I suspect I'll pass this time. Now, in our invitation, or in our passage, rather, this morning, God extends an invitation that is nothing short of spectacular.
- An invitation to life and to love. Now, we gave some thought to the context of Isaiah chapter 55 as we introduced the reading.
- And the final point that I made as we gave that introduction or that background is that as we reach this chapter, the servant of the Lord, the Messiah, has secured our redemption.
- And the banquet of salvation is ready and served. And all that remains is for the guests to be invited. Now, we've just noted, it's almost so obvious that you may feel it doesn't require stressing, but we just noticed that it is God who is extending an invitation.
- And there's no need to labor the point other than to stress that this fact alone points to the generous character of God.
- [3 : 3 3] Our God is an inviting God. And He's inviting in two senses, or the two senses of that word. God, in the sense of an adjective, He is inviting.
- He is attractive. By His very nature and character, He draws to Himself. But also, the Word is a verb. He is a God who invites.

And that's what He's doing in this chapter. And that's what He's doing this morning as we read the chapter and as He speaks to us through the words of Scripture. He is inviting us.

Now, as we think about this invitation, what I'm going to do is I'm going to pose three questions. And as we answer the questions, try and draw out something of the significance of the invitation.

And crucially, more importantly, to try and ensure that you grasp that this is about and for you. So, we're not simply as detached observers wanting to dissect this invitation and say, Oh, well, this is an interesting invitation and these are its characteristics.

[4 : 45] No, I hadn't thought of that. No, we want to hear the invitation as it's directed to us. I want you to hear it as it is directed to you.

And the three questions we'll use to maybe help us are as following. First of all, who are invited? Then what are they offered? What is it that God is offering in this invitation?

And then finally, what is it that those invited have to do? What do you have to do? First of all, then, who are invited? Well, the first verse of Isaiah 55 is very clear on that matter.

Come, all you who are thirsty. Come to the waters. And we could say this in answer to the question, who are invited? Everybody and anybody.

Everybody is invited. The invitation there, come to the waters. The verb come is in its plural form. What God is anticipating is that many will come because all are invited and all are welcome to respond to the invitation.

[5 : 51] Everybody is invited. Everybody can come. There is the disposition on the part of God to receive all who come to Him.

Everybody, but also anybody. When we read at the beginning of that invitation, come all you who are thirsty. There the form of the verb is in the singular.

And in that way, there's a sense of it being directed not only to everybody, to all and sundry, but to anybody. To you.

It's directed to you. Come all you who are thirsty. Come to the waters. Unlike the invitation I received this week, this invitation is not at all exclusive.

It excludes no one. It is directed to all, but it is not for that any less personal. It is directed to you.

[6 : 57] And you are called by name. God directs this invitation to you today. Come, all you who are thirsty. Come to the waters.

And you who have no money, come buy and eat. And the invitation continues. But though we can say, to kick off, as it were, in terms of answering the question, who are invited?

Well, everybody and anybody. We can also notice that those invited are marked by certain characteristics that you might say will make them more likely to respond.

And let's just notice some of these characteristics of those who are invited. Well, first of all, they are the thirsty.

Come all you who are thirsty. We could also describe them as the broke. Not as in the broken, but the broke. Those without money. And we might also say that it's directed to those who, let's call them foolish and dissatisfied.

[7 : 59] And let me just explain what I mean by identifying these characteristics of those who are invited. First of all, the thirsty. Well, that's very clear.

It's very explicit there. Come all you who are thirsty. This invitation is for the weary and the tired and the stressed. This invitation is for those who long to be satisfied.

And I wonder if even at this point, perhaps even as the words were read, as we just read the Bible, I wonder if there was in your soul a sense of identifying with this.

That you know something of what it is to be thirsty, to be dissatisfied in your innermost being. Well, this invitation is for you.

Come all you who are thirsty. But the invitation is also for the broke. It is for the broken. And we're all broken in some way or another.

[9 : 03] But it's for the broke. For those who do not have the resources required. It's really for those who have come to realize that their own resources are insufficient.

And so what is offered does not require resources on the part of those invited. We don't need to buy what is being offered. We don't need to bring anything. All we need to do is receive.

No money. No cost. And so if you have come to realize that your resources are insufficient, then this invitation is very especially directed to you.

Now maybe this morning there's somebody here who imagines that they've got it all together. Maybe you think you've got it all together and you lack nothing. But if you are like most folks, I hope you realize that that's not true.

That your resources are insufficient. Well, this invitation is for those who do not have resources of their own to meet life and all its demands.

[10 : 16] But I've also suggested that the invitation identifies as those to whom it is directed, those who we might describe as foolish or disappointed.

In verse 2, there is an acknowledgement that some of those invited are not short of cash or resources. We read there in verse 2, Why spend on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy?

So having immediately recognized that you don't need money for what is on offer here, nonetheless, God does recognize that we do have resources and we spend those resources.

We have financial resources and resources of other kinds that we spend. And there the problem isn't so much a lack of resource, but the manner in which we employ that resource.

Why spend money on what is not bread and your labor on what does not satisfy? And I think here the idea is to connect with those who maybe have been very successful, maybe are very successful, who have resources, who are doing well, and yet in the midst of their success, in the midst of things going seemingly very well, are beginning to realize that all of that ultimately fails to satisfy at the very deepest level of our being.

[11 : 48] And often that which we do have, that which we have secured, be it financial resources or whatever they are, we employ them foolishly, imagining that by buying the Porsche Cayenne or whatever it is, somehow that will make life better for us.

And so we're reminded that that is not so, and we're urged to think carefully about where we invest our resources.

The foolish, the dissatisfied, those who, having tried to satisfy in different ways and by different means, have found that it has been unsuccessful, or they have been unsuccessful in their attempts.

I wonder if that sounds, in some measure, familiar to you. Well, if it does, then this invitation is for you. So who are invited?

Well, everybody's invited. Anybody's invited. You are invited. The thirsty are invited. Those without resources are invited. Those who have resources but who have been using them unwisely, they're also invited.

[12 : 59] And what are they offered? What are you offered? Well, the passage presents what is offered in the form of a metaphor or picture, but it also identifies the reality that the picture represents.

So let's look at each in turn. The picture, first of all, and then the picture, in a sense, fades into the background, and the reality appears. First of all, then, the picture.

The picture painted is of a banquet of beverages, which seems an unusual banquet. But that's the way we could perhaps describe it. A banquet of beverages.

Water, milk, and wine. Come all who are thirsty. Come to the waters. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

And each of these beverages, these pictures that are employed, they all point to a deep need in every one of us. And these were words written thousands of years ago, and yet they touch on a very contemporary reality for men and women.

[14 : 03] All over the world, these basic needs that we have. Water that refreshes. How we stand in need of refreshment.

Milk that nourishes. And how we all stand in need of nourishment. Wine that gladdens the heart. How we all stand in need of joy and gladness.

We know it's not enough just to have enough to get by. To go through life working and earning and doing what you do. And yet, in the absence of joy, in the absence of gladness, what's the point?

We need to be refreshed. We need to be nourished. We need to be gladdened. And the picture paints this reality. And offers to us these experiences.

But, of course, the picture contains a paradox. The banquet, if we call it a banquet, is rich. The richest of fair is the language we have. But it's also free.

[15 : 08] In this regard, it's very different to the Porsche Cayenne just waiting for me in the showroom. You see, I could go to this preview event, but I sadly couldn't drive away with a car. Because I'd need, I don't even know what I'd need.

They don't tell you how much it costs. But, in this picture, you have this paradox. It's rich. The fair is rich.

But it's free. But there's another twist. You see, in this invitation, there's also the call to buy. Now, it's true. It says, buy without money.

Buy without cost. But nonetheless, the vocabulary of buying is employed. What that really suggests is that what is offered, though free to us, does need to be paid for or bought.

There is a price to pay. But those involved, those invited, you and me, don't have to pay the price. Well, that sounds like a good deal. Maybe it's too good to be true.

[16 : 09] If you ever watch these consumer programs, Watchdog or Rip Off Britain or whatever it is, The experts on these programs, they always warn you. They do say that if something seems to be too good to be true, Then it probably is too good to be true.

Well, I wonder if this is too good to be true. Invited to something that is rich, rich, fair, And yet, without price, free for us.

Well, that's the picture. But what reality does the picture represent? Well, even in thinking about the picture, We've been kind of edging towards the reality. But then towards the end of verse 2, The metaphor begins to fade, To be replaced by the reality, As the prophet speaks, Of your soul being fed.

Listen, listen to me, And eat what is good, And your soul will delight in the richest of fairs. So for the first time, There is this moving from the picture to the reality.

Your soul will be fed. Your soul will be satisfied. The banquet is soul food.

[17 : 15] The water and the milk and the wine Are to refresh and nourish and gladden your soul, Your very being. God wants the very best for you.

Did you know that? That the creator of the universe, He wants the very best for you. I suppose another question I could ask, Not only is, Did you know that?

But do you believe that? Do you believe that that is what God wants for you? He wants the very best for you. And He invites you this morning to be refreshed, To be nourished, To be gladdened.

What's on the table, What God is offering you this morning is way better than a Porsche Cayenne or Carrera, Or whatever it is that you have your eye on.

Way, way better. But what does God offer you that will serve to refresh, Nourish, and gladden?

[18 : 17] There's the offer, But how does that work? What actually is it that will fulfill those functions, That will actually, in your own experience, Refresh you, and nourish you, and gladden you?

Well, we find as we carry on reading in these first couple of verses, It's God Himself. You see, God offers you Himself. In verse 3, Give ear and come to me.

Come to me. God Himself is the one Who will refresh, And nourish, And gladden.

It's not that God provides Water, and milk, and wine. He is the water that refreshes. He is the milk that nourishes. He is wine for your soul.

And God offers Himself to you In the person of His Son, Jesus. You see, this book of Isaiah, And especially these chapters, Serve to point forward to the coming Messiah, The servant of the Lord, Who will secure redemption for His people.

[19 : 28] And so we need to read it in the light of what follows, In the light of the coming of Jesus, The Son of David. God offers you these benefits, In and through the person of His own Son.

He is the one. Jesus is the one Who is able to refresh, And nourish, And gladden. Of course, we see that as we turn to the Gospels, And are brought face to face with the person of Jesus.

Listen to Jesus speaking in language that echoes the language of this invitation. Come to me, All you who are weedy and burdened, And I will give you rest.

I will refresh you. I don't just provide refreshment. It's not some resource that I have, And I'll give you a little bit of it. No, I will give you rest.

I will refresh you. Or the words that we read in John chapter 7, And Jesus also provides the answer to the outstanding riddle of soul food that is precious, And costly, And yet free.

[20 : 48] A moment ago, We saw that paradox. Richest of fear, And yet it's free. And Jesus solves that riddle. Jesus explains that paradox.

Because Jesus paid the price for you. He died on the cross carrying your burden. This is the very truth that Isaiah so powerfully expressed in chapter 53, Just two chapters before our passage.

In verses 4 through to 6 of that chapter, We read, Surely He took up our infirmities. The servant of the Lord, the Messiah, He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.

Yet we considered Him stricken by God, Smitten by Him and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.

And by His wounds we are healed. We all like sheep have gone astray. Each of us has turned to His own way. And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

[21 : 52] In the death of Jesus, Refreshment is secured for sinners. Nourishment is secured for sinners. Joy is secured for sinners.

Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Jesus paid the price that you might experience refreshment, Nourishment, and gladness.

Jesus paid the price that allows God the Father To extend this invitation to you this morning. But then the third question, What must you do?

Well, this passage, even these first three verses, Are replete with a plethora of imperatives. Time and time again, they almost trip over each other.

All the imperatives that we find in these verses. Indeed, we've been talking about God's invitation. And of course, this is an invitation, But it's more than just an invitation.

[22 : 55] God, in these verses, Is graciously inviting and commanding you. He won't force you, But He does invite and command you. And let's just focus on three key imperatives, Commands, directives, In these verses.

First of all, the one that begins the chapter, Come, then listen, And then come again. Not come again, but come a second time.

The first one there, And this is, we're thinking about How you are to respond to this invitation. The first come there in verse 1. Really, the intention of this is to catch your attention.

I hope it has. I hope this has caught your attention. Some have suggested that the picture that is employed here, That Isaiah is employing here, Is not so much that of an invitation to a banquet, Which we've been kind of assuming, But rather the cries of a street seller.

You can maybe imagine in the context of the Middle East, Or some bustling city, Where, you know, it's a little bit warmer than in the UK, And you can have street sellers and activity outside.

[24 : 08] You can imagine one of them enticing you with their wares. Come, taste, buy. And there's this noise all around of this insistence, Trying to catch your attention.

You're going about your business, And they're trying to catch your attention. Look at what I've got. Come and buy what I've got. It's the best. The best quality. The best flavor. And that may well be the picture that Isaiah is employing, To catch the attention of the thirsty.

But these cries, Just as if we were walking through a street on holiday, And there are all these street sellers, And maybe what we try and do is block out That unwelcome background noise, Because we've got things to do, And people to see, And places to go to.

I wonder if we do that in life. God is seeking to catch our attention. He's calling out to us. He's inviting us. Come, listen, taste. And it's just background noise.

Background noise to be shut out. Because we've got other things to do. Other things to occupy our attention. I wonder if you do that. Maybe you've been doing it all your life.

[25 : 26] Maybe you're doing it this morning. Blocking out this call. It would bring you to listen, To pay attention to what God has to say to you.

Well, that's the first imperative. But then in verse 2, you have another one. Listen. Listen. Listen to me and eat what is good. Who are we to listen to? Well, it's very clear.

Listen to me. God says, listen to me. How are we to listen? We're to listen attentively. Listen. Listen to me. The duplication of the very word is intended to stress.

The need for careful attention to what is to be said. Listen. Listen to me. Incline your ear. Give ear. Hear what I have to say.

And the call is to silence out all the other competing voices and just listen to what God is saying to you.

[26 : 27] Listen to the words of God. Listen. And listen now. I urge you to listen as this invitation is directed to you.

But then we have the third imperative that I want to focus on. There's more than three. And it's come but used a second time and in a slightly different sense.

In verse 3, we read, Give ear and come to me. No longer is it simply a case of our attention being sought.

But here we have a clear and explicit instruction, direction, invitation to come to God. And we do so, as we've touched on, in and through Jesus.

The one who said of himself, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me. But what does coming to God in and through Jesus involve or look like?

[27 : 30] Well, remember the words of Jesus that I drew your attention to a moment ago. If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. And then what does it say?

What does Jesus say? Whoever believes in me, As the Scripture has said, Streams of living water will flow from within him. Jesus explains what it means to come to him.

And what it means is to believe in him. To trust in him. You need to believe in Jesus. You need to trust in Jesus as your Savior. As your Lord.

And you can do that. You can do that now. We all need to do that. If you've done it before, we need to do it again. If you've never done it, well, now is a good day to start. And there where you are, you can speak to him.

Lord Jesus, I'm thirsty. I'm weedy. I'm tired. I'm a sinner who can't sort out my own life with my own resources. I thought I could, but I realize that I can't. I believe that you are the Savior.

[28 : 30] That you died on the cross, baring my burden, my sins. And I put my trust in you. That's something you can say to him. Today, now. Trust in him.

Believe in him. That's what you need to do. Now, I said three questions, but let me just finish with one final question. What happens to those who respond to this invitation?

Well, many of us have discovered what happens. You will be refreshed. You will be nourished. You will be gladdened. And this will happen as you enjoy new life and a new love.

In verse 3, we read, Come to me that your soul may live. Your decision to trust in Jesus is just the beginning of a new life.

And when we think about that, this invitation to life, Come to me that your soul may live. Quite rightly, we focus on the positive of that, but it is worth, just for a moment, solemnly considering the alternative.

[29 : 32] Well, what's the alternative? Well, the alternative is clear. If you don't come to Jesus, you'll die. That's the alternative. So what will you choose? Will you choose death, or will you choose life? Come to me that your soul may live.

New life, but also what we could call a new love. You see, in that verse, God goes on to say, I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

You will be refreshed and nourished and gladdened, but you will enjoy and experience all of these things in the context of a new relationship of love with God. That is to what you are invited this morning.

Well, many invitations are extended to us in different ways. We began this morning by thinking of one that I received. And if you do get one of these envelopes through your letterbox this week, which is highly unlikely because it's only directed to very special people, it's an exclusive invitation.

But in the event that you were to receive one of these envelopes, you can do what you want with it. You could go along, enjoy the nibbles, go for a test drive, buy the car for all I care.

[30 : 54] I don't want to appear aloof, but I really don't care what you do. You could stay at home and watch the football. Whatever. It really doesn't matter.

But the invitation that God directs to you this morning is another matter altogether. This is a loving and an urgent invitation directed to you.

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters. Come to me that your soul may live.

And I would urge you to accept this invitation. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you that you are indeed an inviting God. We thank you that you are altogether attractive and beautiful.

And as we are enabled to open our eyes to something of your beauty, we are drawn to your beauty and your splendor. But we thank you that you are also an inviting God who actively reaches out to us and invites us to yourself.

[32 : 03] We thank you for the beautiful invitation that has been extended to us today. And I pray that we would all be enabled to respond to that invitation and experience the refreshing and the nourishing and gladdening of our souls that is offered and promised to us.

And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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