

That Which Satisfies

Proper 13

Pastor Josh Frazee

Isaiah 55:1-5

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Last weekend we sang the hymn “A Mighty Fortress.” Here are some of the words that we proclaimed: “Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us, We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower us. This world’s prince may still Scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him. The Word they still shall let remain Nor any thanks have for it; He’s by our side upon the plain With His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife, Though these all be gone, Our vict’ry has been won; The kingdom ours remaineth.” These are words of contentment. They are words of satisfaction.

But what, or who, has led to this satisfaction? It was, and is, the Lord our God. It is He and only He who can give us that which truly satisfies. The compassion of our Lord God is beyond measure or understanding; and it is found in the grace of our Savior Jesus Christ.

In our Old Testament text, we hear our God calling us to the bread of His compassion.

Verse 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. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?”

Our Lord God has sent out a summons, and continues to call for all to come to Him for what they need. This world tries in so many ways to make us think that it has just what we need to be satisfied. Come, drink this Mountain Dew, or this iced cold tea, and you will be satisfied. Come, eat this Whopper or this juicy steak, and your stomach will be full. Come, try yoga, to clear your mind. Come, listen to false prophets—they have knowledge that your pastor doesn’t have. But in every one of these cases, if you did them to be spiritually content, you would be left empty. You may feel something for a while, but ultimately, you won’t be content. You will be left wanting more.

So God calls from our church, just as He did from the prophets: “Come...why spend your money for that...which does not satisfy?” God offers “without money and without price.” Ask any bargain hunter or sale searcher what their favorite words are and they’ll say “Clearance” and “Free.” And God doesn’t offer on clearance, but freely.

Many today ignore or pass by God’s Word, refusing what He so freely offers. But they never know, just as we never know, when we will be hearing His invitation for the last time.

On the flipside, we must not come to believe we are fully versed in the Scriptures either. Luther comments here “Let no one seem to himself to have accomplished much in Scripture and to have heard many things, since in spite of that he loses the knowledge of the Word in forgetfulness day by day. From there let the mind be restored and recleansed as from a fog of ignorance, so that the heat and fervor in the Word may increase against the gates of death. Where people have been especially trained in the Word, there they are negligent. This is a common complaint of preachers. Such exhortation is therefore especially necessary, lest they fall into contempt and loathing of the Word (Luther’s Works, Vol.17).”

Verse 2

Therefore God implores us through His prophet: “Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline 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.”

Unlike the merchant that God sounds like in this passage, what God offers is not literal bread, but His Word. To His Word we are implored to listen diligently and to delight in. This is why we come to church. After all, you don't go to County Market or Aldi's because you want to spend time with the cashier; you go because you need what is being offered. So, too, you don't come to church because of the pastor or the person across the aisle from you, you come to receive God's gifts—His Word and His Sacraments offered freely for your good.

When you receive His Word, you are made recipients of the promise of God to David—that his would be an everlasting house. The End of the Age is coming, but for those of us found in Christ Jesus, we are not scared. We are ready to enter into eternal bliss with God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Holy Spirit.

But with the covenant our God has with us, it is *He* who has accomplished it all. There is nothing left to be done. Often in the Old Testament, a covenant required two parties, both of whom would have to do something to fulfill the covenant. To seal the deal, they would also split an animal and walk through the halves together to signify that each person would do what was needed to complete the pact.

We human beings are incapable of doing what is needed to keep any promises with God regarding our salvation. God desires that we would keep His commandments perfectly and flawlessly. But you know that you are not able to live up to this expectation. That's why God did it all. He has asked us to come to His Word and to live it and that He would give life everlasting. God, though, was the One who brought us to His Word by the working of His Holy Spirit. God was the One who fulfilled the Law in our place, living in this world in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. And God was the One who won for us eternal life by His Son's death on the cross of Calvary. Of this, Jesus has been made a witness.

Verse 3

As God has said in our Old Testament text: “Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. 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.”

God has made Christ to witness to His victory over sin, death, and the devil, but more than that, God has declared, according to Luther's commentary, that the way in which this news will continue to spread will be through our witness. This is how Luther put it: “Christ must reign among the nations by testimony. The emphasis is on *witness*. For Christ must reign through witnesses and testimony, that is, through the Gospel. Again he distinguishes the old testament from the new, since Christ leads and rules through the Word, not with weapons and armies. ‘Behold, you, whoever you were, will be gathered to Christ through witness and word.’ Thus he repudiates the Jews who do not want to believe the witnesses. He took to Himself a people who were not a people, and He cast off the Jews, as Paul says (Luther's Works, Vol. 17).”

God calls you to hear His Word without cost and believe that you have been freely saved, but He doesn't make you. There are many among us today—not just the Jews but even groups calling themselves Christian—who believe that life everlasting is earned by works righteousness. But that is not what God has said, or what He offers. God offers full forgiveness and salvation and all of the benefits for free, on account of His Son's death and resurrection in your place and mine. *This* is the bread which truly satisfies. In Jesus' Name. Amen.