

# The Invitation

The Rev. Nancy Willet  
Isaiah 55: 1-9

The Third Sunday in Lent

FPC Uvalde  
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Our lesson today from the prophet Isaiah was probably written around 550 – 445 BC—a long, long time ago—nearly 600 years before Jesus Christ. It was during the time when Isaiah was busy doing his prophesying and Babylon was the empire that would never fall. What we have today in our Lenten lectionary reading, for me, is an oasis—a bright spot of hope in the midst of our other rather somber Lenten readings.

The Jews had been in exile in Babylon for nearly 50 years, and this vision Isaiah gave to them must've seemed like an absolute fairy tale. He offered a homecoming for those who were lost (they had been lost for so many years, they didn't even know what home felt like any more!), a rich feast, fresh water, a community of hope, and all of this is free! Wow! That kind of offer is not something to be turned down.

He mentions King David to them to stir their memory of better times and in hope of giving comfort to these exiled Jews.

Let me stir *your* memory a bit here. Do you remember when you were a young child and it was suppertime? How would your mom or dad call you in for supper? Well, my sisters and I were usually outside playing, and my Dad had a Bozeman's whistle that he thought was pretty cool. He would step out on the porch and blow the whistle—ooo-weee-ooo, two or three times and we would come running. I guess was the Okie way—or at least the Pelton way of saying, "Come and get it!"

We were happy to go running home, because we were usually pretty hungry. Those Jews in exile were probably pretty darn happy to have someone yell "come and get it!" to them, too. I think they were hungry, they were thirsty, and they wanted a place to call home. All these things they could get, Isaiah told them, and it was free!

But what about those times when we are hungry or thirsty and we are so busy with other things that we don't even realize our hunger or thirst? I have been told that there are signs at the top of the Grand Canyon for hikers preparing to hike the canyon, that say "Stop! Drink water! You are thirsty, whether you realize it or not!"

How do you realize when you are thirsty? There are, of course, those obvious times when you have been sweating buckets and your mouth is dry and you just need to quench it. But what about those times when you are in a low humidity area like the Grand Canyon or the mountains somewhere and you really never sweat? How *do* we recognize our own needs? Sometimes, you have to be told. "Stop, Drink water!"

That is what Isaiah was doing for those Jews in exile in Babylon. It's like he was saying, "Stop, drink water! You are thirsty whether you realize it or not!" Isaiah says to come to God to get fed and watered, and do this for free! Don't work for things you don't need, things that don't ultimately satisfy—eat what is good, enjoy yourselves and eat rich food! Yea!!!

Just like we may be thirsty and not even realize it, I think there are times when we may not even realize that we have wandered away from God—how at times life seems to have lost its meaning in our pursuit of happiness through other worldly routes. Has our happiness been skewed into the world’s idea of contentment and the world’s methods of seeking contentment?

Being a thirty-something back in the 1980’s—back when the stock market was soaring and before the dot com bubble had burst, it was easy—oh so easy—for to measure one’s worth with one’s productivity—with a stock portfolio or the square footage of your home. But what a trap that is! We all know we are not living in the financial high times of the 80’s anymore, are we? What happens when our bank accounts go belly up and the mortgage company wants their house back? We get exiled right out of our sense of security really darn quick.

And you know, as much as we all can say no one would ever want that for themselves, that type of exile is a decision each of us make—consciously or not. The voice of the empire *does* want to reshape our values and dreams, and I am here to tell you—those kinds of values and dreams are fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That is why we need that prophet Isaiah as much today as those Jewish exiles did those thousands of years ago. We need someone to call out to us and say, “Hey--wake up, you are thirsty!” “Listen, so that you may live!” “I will give you plenty to eat and plenty to drink—I will give you rich food beyond your wildest dreams—and you won’t have to worry about the dot com bubble bursting or the stock market crashing!” I will give you all of this for free!” It does seem like a fairy tale, doesn’t it? But it is not.

That fairy tale is the truth that I believe is buried deep within each of us—that divine spark of love—God’s love—that *keeps* us restless, that keeps us longing for more, longing to go back home from our place of exile--**even and in spite of** a world full of excess.

God seemed to realize that all this probably would probably be pretty difficult for those who hear and study this passage to understand. Our reading for today ends with the Lord saying, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

It’s as if God understood what a difficult time we would have getting our head wrapped around the concept of free bread and wine—of buying these things without any money, so God tells us not to worry, He knows we don’t think like he does. I read a quote by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. once that said, “If I have to explain it to you, you wouldn’t understand.” I think that is what God was saying here, too.

If we align our thoughts with the thoughts of the world—with conventional wisdom, then none of this *is* going to make any sense. However, if we “come” and “buy” as Isaiah tells us to -- come and buy into a higher reasoning, a different way of doing business, a divine wisdom, then, we will align ourselves with the divine purpose and we will be well on our way home for supper after that Bozeman’s whistle is blown or we hear those magic words, “Come and get it!”

Could there be a more fitting invitation to God’s table this morning than the words we have received here from Isaiah? God is calling us this morning to “Come and get it!” All who are weary come home to God. All who are thirsty come to the waters. Free bread and cup offered here! — Bread and wine that will satisfy. Bread and wine that will fill our deepest needs.

Come to the table today at the invitation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Come thirsty and come hungry, for here—“God gives grace to the ambitious, rest to the weary, comfort to the hurting, peace and joy to us all.”

Let us pray: Loving God, Giver of free gifts, Parent to the exiled, we give you thanks today for your precious Word. May our hearts be opened so we can hear you calling to us today. “Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in you.” Amen.

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Sources:

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