

DON'T STAY THIRSTY, MY FRIENDS

ISAIAH 55:1-7 MAY 30, 2021

“Stay thirsty, my friends” was the slogan of *The Most Interesting Man in the World*, seen in a series of ads that ran for 12 years on television. The agency behind the campaign said their strategy was to create a character who comes across in “the way the audience hopes to be in the future.”¹ The ads proved successful, boosting sales every year. The slogan “stay thirsty” is pitched to us in these grandiose terms that you should fill your life with all sorts of experiences, drinking a bunch of *Dos Equis* along the way. In reality, the slogan reveals the company’s practical hope that you, the customer, really *would* stay thirsty, keep buying the beer, and never have your thirst slaked.

Thirst is a universal craving. It’s a basic and critical requirement that must be addressed. It is the signal within every creature that there is a lack and a need and that time is running out to deal with this essential concern.

In the Bible, the need for salvation is compared to thirst multiple times. We need a spiritual life with God as much as the body needs water. David said, “my soul thirsts for God.” Jesus told a Samaritan woman, “drink from this well and you’ll thirst again, but ask of Me and I’ll give you eternal life so that you’ll never thirst again.” In the wilderness wanderings, the children of Israel cried out to Moses because of their thirst and God sent them water from a rock. While that really happened, Paul explained that it was also a beautiful picture of how that rock was Christ, Whose living water will save and sustain and satisfy.

In Isaiah 55, we have another famous passage that compares salvation to the quenching of thirst. In it, God speaks to *anyone* who will listen. Originally, this was a message addressed to the Jews near the time of the Babylonian captivity. But its scope goes far beyond that immediate group. We’ll see that in the passage, but students of the New Testament will recall that Jesus Christ took *this* text and revealed Himself in it, addressing it to everyone.²

In this message, what does God have to say? We’ll find it is urgent but tender. It is both a warning and an invitation. It shows us that God is immeasurably compassionate, mighty to save, and personally concerned for your life and your future.

Isaiah 55:1 - “Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the water; and you without silver, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without silver and without cost!”

Your translation may start the chapter with “Ho!” or a similar exclamation. From the beginning, we should sense God’s *urgency*. Bible dictionaries will explain that the word used is “a signal expressing woe,”³ but it is also an exclamation with sympathy and pity.⁴

Right away, we sense that God sees danger where we might not. In this first verse, He calls out to us four times, “Come, come, come, come!” Who? Everyone who is thirsty. It’s significant that He uses thirst as the signal. Why not “everyone who is sad” or “everyone who is defeated?” It’s because *everyone* gets thirsty. While you may not feel it at the moment, the fact of the matter is that

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Most_Interesting_Man_in_the_World

² John 7:37

³ DBL Hebrew

⁴ Abridged BDB

God has placed eternity in your heart so that you will thirst for Him. As we'll see in the coming verses, you may have taken a gulp of something and don't feel that thirst at this very moment, but the need for salvation is like the need for water. It's universal.

God invites *anyone* to come and receive a draught from Him, who is the source and keeper of life-giving water. And He establishes that this is not something you can buy. It is a completely free gift. You don't have money? No problem. You *do* have money? Doesn't matter. This is a cost-free offer.

Have you been getting those "no-cost" solar brochures on your door? We did the other day. In some of those programs there's a catch. Either the panels aren't really yours, or there's some hidden fee tucked away in the agreement. That's not the kind of offer God makes. No, He looks out on humanity with love and compassion and says, "They're thirsty. They need to be saved from death and saved from their mistakes. Saved from themselves. I have the one thing that will fix their spiritual thirst, once and for all." And He offers it freely. The only requirement is a willing heart. Who will come? And, notice, not *only* receive that water but also He throws in wine and milk.

Water, milk, wine, these, in general terms, speak to us of survival, sustenance, and satisfaction. You see, God's plan to save you isn't *just* first aid/CPR. Have you ever taken a CPR class? After you learn rescue breathing and chest compressions, they don't then say, "Ok, now we're going to teach you how to give the person you're helping a balanced diet and a happy life." But God is mindful, not only of saving us from death and hell but for bringing us strength and satisfaction and savor in *this* life as well. He has a comprehensive plan for your life on both sides of eternity.

Isaiah 55:2 - ²Why do you spend silver on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and you will enjoy the choicest of foods.

God is our Creator. He is the Great Physician. He knows exactly what's going on in our hearts and our minds. He knows our deepest needs and what will happen if He doesn't rescue us. That knowledge, paired with His extravagant generosity, begs the question here in verse 2. He comes to humankind and says, "I want to address the deepest needs and problems that you have for now and for the next life. I'll give all this to you *freely*, so *why* are you going to these other places to try to find fulfillment and purpose and deliverance?"

When you're physically thirsty, you respond by drinking something. But God points out that we humans often try to satisfy our *spiritual* thirst with things that could never work. Our souls hurt, so we buy material objects. Our hearts feel empty, so we seek out physical pleasure or earthly accomplishment or some other means to distract ourselves from that unquenched longing within. That would be like being physically thirsty and saying, "Well, I'll do a bunch of jumping jacks to fix it." Or, "I'll put on some new shoes. That will fix it."

Sometimes people try to fix their spiritual thirst by going to things that *seem* spiritual but are not in line with the revealed word of God. Man's philosophies and world religions. These are things that try to mimic what God has freely offered, but they can't fill the heart. It's like *Dos Equis*. If you're thirsty, drinking beer doesn't help you. Alcohol is a diuretic. It causes your body to *remove* fluids from itself.⁵

Meanwhile, the Lord comes to us and says, "I will show you and give you the choicest of foods." Not only does God's salvation fix us, it's a life full of goodness and enjoyment. Listen, I know that I "should" eat a bunch of kale and a bunch less sugar. That would be all fix with no enjoyment. That's

⁵ <https://www.healthline.com/health/does-alcohol-dehydrate-you>

not the way God has set up a relationship with Him. He brings salvation. He brings survival for us, but *also* strength, satisfaction, and savor.

Psalm 16:11 - You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.

So, in verse two, in addition to urgency and generosity, we see God's great tenderness. He sees how people are *wasting* their efforts and their resources and their lives, and He says, "Don't do that. Come with Me and delight yourself in fatness." This idea that true Christianity, true spirituality, requires constant self-affliction or asceticism, that's not how God depicts His offer to us. For example: the Puritans had an idea that you can't wear bright colors because that dishonors God. That kind of mindset flies in the face of what God reveals in the Psalms and here in our text.

Isaiah 55:3 - ³Pay attention and come to me; listen, so that you will live. I will make a permanent covenant with you on the basis of the faithful kindnesses of David.

I'm sure all of us have passed by a salesman without giving any attention to them, whether it's the guy handing out flyers on the street or the girl scout table outside the grocery store. We catch a glimpse and then just walk on by. Sadly, that is the way many respond to the message of that Gospel. And here, in addition to the generous offer, the lavish promises, God makes Himself very clear: "Pay attention and come to Me. If you don't, you're going to die."

And that's the truth. You see, that *thirst* that verse 1 talked about is a symptom of sin. The Bible explains that all have sinned and that the wages of sin is death. Meanwhile, sin separates us from God. But God has made a way to reconcile us to Himself so that He can give us everlasting life. He does so through unbreakable covenant promises. But notice that word *covenant*. God offers you a choice in this thing. It's not like in an *Avengers* movie where someone snaps their fingers, and you're either saved or doomed. God keeps an open invitation, but we see here that it's up to you whether you will agree to receive what God wants to give you. He calls you to come. He asks you to listen. On our part, there's a choice in the mind, a choice whether we'll move toward God or not. To ignore God's call is to make the choice to die eternally. But there's no need for that because a suffering Servant came to earth and willingly submitted to death Himself so that now we can live. That's what Isaiah chapter 53 is all about. That's what the life of Jesus was all about in the first century AD. He took our place to pay our debt and then credit to us all of His richness. And even though the Jews in exile would be thinking, "Well, we're in Babylonian captivity. The line of David is ended." The Gospels reveal that Jesus Christ is not only a descendant of David; He is the prophesied *Son of David*, who will sit on the throne forever and ever. God will keep His unstoppable promises.

Isaiah 55:4-5 - ⁴Since I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples, ⁵so you will summon a nation you do not know, and nations who do not know you will run to you. For the Lord your God, even the Holy One of Israel, has glorified you."

Commentators disagree over whether these verses refer solely to Jesus or if they also speak of Israel the nation. Here's what we can see if we step back a little. First, God's compassionate love is not just for the individual or only a select number of people. His plan to redeem is for nations everywhere. While today the nations of the world live in rebellion against God, there is a time coming when all will be made right, the nations will be healed, and God will be known and worshiped worldwide. Instead of rejecting the Lord, men will run to Him and to His people.

Looking forward to that time in what we call the Millennial Kingdom, Zechariah writes:

Zechariah 8:23 - “In those days, ten men from nations of every language will grab the robe of a Jewish man tightly, urging: Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Verse 5 pulls back the curtain even a little more. We’ve seen the quenching of thirst, the saving from death, the enjoyment of God’s provision. But here, we additionally see God’s intent to *glorify* His people. He will complete His promises by supplying for us a perfect resurrection body, by sharing His Kingdom with us, allowing us to be meaningful participants in its administration. He will fill us with joy and make us like His Son. We will be perfected once and for all. That is His covenant to us.

Isaiah 55:6 - “Seek the Lord while he may be found; call to him while he is near.

A person might find themselves thinking, “Well, all these promises sound pretty good, but I’ve got a lot of other things I want to do. Since this invitation from God is open all the time, what hurry is there?” Maybe that’s you today. Perhaps you’re thinking, “I don’t feel so thirsty in my heart. I must be ok.” God is telling you two things: First, you are *dying*. Second, do something about it now. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6, “today is the day of salvation.” It’s true - a God this generous will still be generous in 10 years, assuming He waits to return. The more important question is: Will *you* be alive in 10 years? Will you be alive tomorrow? The choice to come to the Lord must be decided in *this* life. Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed for man once to die and after this comes judgment. Those who refuse to come into this glorious feast of salvation will be thrown into outer darkness forever and ever, not because that’s what God wants, but because *you would not answer* when called.

If you have not responded to God’s invitation, there will come a point where it is too late for you. Many of Jesus’ parables deal with this very thing. The good news is that you don’t have to accomplish some great feat to prove you want salvation. It’s simple: Seek and call. The Bible promises that if you seek God, you will find Him. And it promises that all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved. If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Isaiah 55:7 - ⁷Let the wicked one abandon his way and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, so he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will freely forgive.

Wait, is God suddenly changing the terms and conditions? No. To go to the Lord and drink of His everlasting life means you change directions. You were heading down one road in life, now you turn and go *His* way. His way leads away from evil and selfishness, and sin. You see, when we go our own way, we invariably reach the destinations of death and judgment. That’s what the Psalms and Proverbs explain. God sees this calamity and gives us this warning so that we will turn back, turn toward Him and be saved. We need a new way, new thoughts, a new heart. They’re all provided by Jesus Christ along with the free forgiveness of everything wrong we’ve ever done.

But, like a drink of water, this forgiveness must be accepted and received in order to be of any use to us. If you’ve ever been to a marathon, you’ll see a bunch of runners and, on the sidelines, a bunch of people holding out cups of water. And you’ll see lots of cups being passed by. The runners aren’t thirsty at the moment, so they pass on by.

Let me give you a more chilling example. In 2007, Dave Buschow joined a hiking expedition with 11 other people in the Utah desert. He had paid over \$3,000 for the course, which was being led by “expert guides.” The adventure was designed to test physical and mental toughness. Dave signed a waiver, acknowledging that the trip could lead to serious injury or death. On day 2 of the journey, after 10 hours without a drink in the 100-degree heat, Dave dropped dead less than 100 yards from their goal: A cave with a pool of water. The guides walking with him *had* water, but everyone wanted to do it on their own.⁶ The result was a completely avoidable tragedy: Dave Buschow lost his life.

There’s no need to stay thirsty, my friends. The God of the universe wants to rescue you from hell, rescue you from sin, rescue you from wasting your life. You cannot find what you need anywhere other than Jesus Christ. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And, as we’ve seen today, He is the Leader and Commander, the coming King who will rule forever and ever. He is full of compassion and generosity, and gracious love. Still, He does have these requirements: You must listen, you must believe, you must turn toward Him, forsaking your sin and the path you’ve made for yourself, and instead, acknowledge that He is Lord and He is God and He is the Provider of salvation, sustenance, satisfaction, strength and a true savor in this life. You can do it right now in the quiet of your heart. And, like God did in these verses, we *urge* you to do it today. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Listen, so that you will live.

Now, what about those of us who are already believers here today, who have already tasted and seen that the Lord *is* good? I would imagine that includes most of us listening this morning. Much of what we’ve heard today is geared toward the lost. So, is there something for us to apply? There is, of course. I’d offer us a reminder and a reality.

First, the reminder: There in verse 7, we see that phrase “return to the Lord,” and in verse 4 that He is our Leader and Commander. We’re reminded that we are the sheep of His hand. He is our Shepherd. As we go through life, we’re to follow after His leading. We’re to listen and enjoy His rule over our lives continually. We’re to trust Him and remain faithfully in the fold of His gracious boundaries. Allow Him to set the course of your life. Before you were saved, your navigation was completely wrong. Now that we are saved, our own navigation is still just as wrong. We need the Lord to direct us by His word and His Holy Spirit so that we can lay hold of all He wants for us.

Second, the reality: Jesus, speaking to that Samaritan woman about *her* thirst - her need for salvation - explained that when a person answers the invitation to come and drink, then they are not only saved and satisfied, they are *transformed*. He said, “The one who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him.” Meaning that you and I are not only recipients of God’s grace; we become points of supply for others. As the Body of Christ, we are meant to flow through the world, bringing this salvation with us wherever we go. We go through the world, joining the chorus of God, calling the lost to salvation, *and* we supply grace and help and hope to the people around us. Be a guide that *gives* water to the thirsty *and* helps them reach the end goal. And show the world around you what God has given to you: Salvation, sustenance, satisfaction, the savor of everlasting life, all freely available to all who will come for a drink.

⁶ <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/hiker-dies-of-thirst-with-water-all-around/>