

“What Can We Offer?”

Message by DD Adams

Providence United Methodist Church

3rd Sunday In Lent / Confirmation Sunday

February 28, 2016

Today’s Old Testament lesson is from the book of Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 1 through 9. I’ll be reading from the *Common English Bible*. All of you who are thirsty, come to the water! Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat! Without money, at no cost, buy wine and milk! Why spend money for what isn’t food, and your earnings for what doesn’t satisfy?

Listen carefully to me and eat what is good; enjoy the richest of feasts. Listen and come to me; listen, and you will live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful loyalty to David. Look, I made him a witness to the peoples, a prince and commander of peoples. Look, you will call a nation you don’t know, a nation you don’t know will run to you because of the LORD your God, the holy one of Israel, who has glorified you.

Seek the LORD when he can still be found; call him while he is yet near. Let the wicked abandon their ways and the sinful their schemes. Let them return to the LORD so that he may have mercy on them, to our God, because he is generous with forgiveness. My plans aren’t your plans, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my plans than your plans. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Thanks be to God. Let’s pray. God we trust that you have prepared each heart and opened each mind to bless the word that will be received. Give us ears that listen and help us to apply the living words to our lives as we seek your face.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Isaiah can be broken into three books. Isaiah 55 is at the tail end of Second Isaiah which comprises chapters 40 through 55. These chapters represent the time when the Jews were exiled in Babylonia in the sixth century before Christ. Isaiah 55 is at the first appearance of the Persian Empire. The Jews would reclaim their land and start the process of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem.

Listen again to the beginning of the text. “Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat! Without money, *at no cost*, buy wine and milk.” So I’m thinking, “Now wait a minute. Nothing is free! Where’s the price tag?”

I liked the invitation because it’s inclusive. Everyone is invited to the feast. And then I begin reasoning this invitation out again. “Yea right, come on, nothing is free. Everything in life has a price tag on it. What’s the catch?” The prophet offers wine and milk and to eat your fill, but come on now, how much are the tickets?”

We just read that the Jews were exiles. They couldn’t afford a darn thing! They had no money, and they were completely helpless to change their situation. So what’s the text saying *to us*? Verse 2 said “Why spend money for what isn’t food, and your earnings for what doesn’t satisfy?” So we’ve been spending our money on food that doesn’t satisfy?

The text said it’s the richest of feasts! We walk away satisfied and full. When we eat and are satisfied to the brim the food strengthens us, it gives us life, it becomes part of who we are. We’re empowered to affect the lives of others, but *we first* must be affected by accepting the invitation to come and eat!

The verses are full of food imagery. There’s choices to make that cause us to wonder, “What’s the catch? Is there an exchange of some kind we make here?”

You bet there is. The food fills us and empowers us to change our lives and not just our life!

The good news of salvation, the bread and the wine—they set us free from the things that enslave us. They capture our hearts, and hinder us from serving God. Good nutrition that feeds our soul is seeking the Lord and turning away from things that captivate our wayward hearts. It's a choice.

Listen to verses 8 and 9 again. “My plans aren't your plans, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my plans than your plans.”

Okay, I get it. So God, what did you say the price was? Or maybe there's an exchange? What is it God? When you buy something you give something equal in exchange right? At least that's the human way. You give something back, but Romans 11:35 says no one has given the Lord a gift and has been paid back by him. Yet, we know we have something the Lord wants. What is it we part with?

We have 2 things the Lord wants, and when we part with them, we've made that great exchange. It's an exchange that leads us to that secret place that covers and hides us from the enemy of our soul. This secret place is a covering, it's a tent, a hidden place that protects and empowers us make right choices.

We offer to the Lord our heart—all of it. We exchange our self-sufficiency for God's sufficiency. We pray to make God's way our way. We part with our sin on a daily basis and confess it to the LORD. We acknowledge we need Thee every hour. If it were not for the Lord's grace, the love and mercy God pours down on us, we would not come to him.

Instead, we come to the water, we eat and drink and are satisfied. We seek the Lord in prayer. We exchange our sin and self-sufficiency for the mouthwatering nutritious food that strengthens us for God's service. Our spiritual

journey is progressive. We learn who we are and what we *really* need. We learn what truly satisfies, and we start seeking more and more the things that truly satisfy. We think, respond, and live life as a Christian more every day.

“Fireside Stories of Life, Love, and Laughter” is a book written and compiled by Mary Hollingsworth. In it there’s a story told about Fritz Kreisler. He was a 20th century violin virtuoso and set out for Hamburg, Germany to give a concert in London. Kreisler had an hour before his boat sailed so he wandered into a music shop, where the proprietor asked if he might look at the violin Kreisler was carrying.

He then vanished and returned with two policemen, one of whom told the violinist, “You are under arrest.” “What for?” asked Kreisler. “You have Fritz Kreisler’s violin.” “I am Fritz Kreisler,” protested the musician. “No you’re not. Come along.” As Kreisler’s boat was sailing soon, there was no time for prolonged explanations.

Kreisler asked for his violin and played a piece he was well known for. “Now are you satisfied?” he asked. The policemen let the musician go because *he had done what only Fritz Kreisler could do*. Bottom line is this. Let’s be who we’re called to be and live out that calling as we serve the church and God in our community. Let’s make the choices, go to that secret place, and seek the LORD while he can still be found.

Let’s pray. God you are El Shaddai—the One who is all-sufficient. Move in us to exchange our self-sufficiency for your all-mighty sufficiency. We acknowledge that you nourish, protect, and satisfy. Remind us who we are and call us back again to seek you through service and discipleship. Amen.