

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
Easter Sunday**

“We Are Going Home!”

Hymns: 157 – 143 – 265 – 152 –
752 – Closing: 141

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

Isaiah 55:1-3, 6-9, 12-13 –

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.

Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."

There's no place like... HOME! Do you know who said that?

The very word evokes feelings, doesn't it? For many, it's feelings of:

- Security
- Welcome

- Warmth
- Love
- Laughter
- Good sleep
- Good food
- Your parents

There's no place like home. It's no wonder that books, songs, and movies have focused on being or going home:

- Dorothy mused in *“The Wizard of Oz”* that “There's no place like home.”
- “Home on the Range”
- “Country Roads, Take Me Home”
- Countless children wished that Lassie would come home
- Tales about ET

People have enjoyed stories about there being “no place like home!”

On this Easter Sunday, we're concluding the sermon series that we've been following during our midweek services, and we will learn the same concept. ***“Singing with the Exiles”*** has been our theme as we have looked at readings from the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Today, the words of Scripture through the prophet Isaiah give us a foreshadowing about how ***“We are going home!”*** Let's walk through these verses of Isaiah 55.

Verses 1-3 tell us, *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David.”*

There are two things that will be vital for us to remember as we study these verses today. They both have to do with the context:

1. The first fact is that these verses are spoken to soon-to-be-exiles. Each week we have recounted how Isaiah's words were to God's wayward people of the Old Testament who had wandered far

from home. They had forsaken him and adopted other gods. They had given those gods their worship and obedience. Because of that they soon would be exiled to the far-off nation of Babylon, 900 miles away from home. What grace God was expressing to them!

2. The second fact is that Isaiah 55 follows Isaiah 53. That might seem pretty obvious, but remember this context! Isaiah 53 is the Good Friday chapter about the Suffering Servant of the Lord who was “pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities.” Isaiah 55 rejoices in the results of that unique work of the Messiah.

As these verses open, we hear an invitation. It is coming from what almost sounds like a vendor! *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!”* It sounds like a vendor in a marketplace in a country where the culture is to call out your goods for people to come and buy. This vendor is urgently calling:

- There’s an untranslated Hebrew word at the beginning of this chapter that’s difficult to include. It’s a call to attention, similar to our English word, “Ahoy!” Some more literal translations put in a “Hey!” or a “Ho!”
- Then the vendor calls out repeatedly, “Come! Come!” “Listen! Listen!” Whenever Scripture uses repetition like this, as Jesus lamented over his people (“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem”), great emotion is shown.
- The vendor knows he has a need to fill in people. “You who are thirsty, come!”

What does he have for the thirsty, which he urgently wants to share? His wares are pure water, milk and wine, and rich food. Home, as we said, does evoke memories of food for many people. Do you remember special food and meals from your times at your home? What food is special to your past? And even water from home is special. If you travel away from your home now, you might have to drink water

that’s not familiar. Do you enjoy filling up a big cup of water at the hotel sink and drinking it down? Or is the water you have at home more to your satisfaction?

The picture that the Lord is using here is spiritual, of course. And it’s a picture that’s used throughout Scripture. To the woman at the well, Jesus said he offered “living water,” spiritual water that satisfied. **This water is the forgiveness of sins, a right standing before God, a clear conscience, and knowledge of where you will go after this life. This satisfies the hungry soul!**

And the cost? It’s FREE! This is usually true about home, isn’t it? I’ve gone back to visit my folks many, many times from my college and seminary days up till now, when a family of seven invades. Yet I don’t ever remember my parents saying at the end of a meal, “Here’s your charge for what you ate.” (Maybe they will now, if they listen to this sermon recording!)

At this marketplace in Isaiah 55, there is no need to haggle with the vendor. The price is free. And the basis for this proclamation today is Easter Day. As we said, Isaiah 55 follows Isaiah 53. The suffering of the Servant is past. The despising, the abuse, the mocking is done. His death and demise has occurred. Our commemoration of the Lenten accounts during the past 40 days of this season is over. Today, we hear about the women who came to the tomb to finish anointing his body and were told, “He is not here. He has risen, just as he said!” The grave could not hold Christ, for he was victorious over it. He completely paid the price of our sin and guilt, and he has risen victoriously.

Because of this, forgiveness is yours. Drink deeply! Enjoy fine food and milk and wine! And at no cost. Nothing to pay, nothing to fulfill, nothing to sacrifice. All because of what we see culminate on Easter Day.

As Isaiah reports so well, why would anyone want to trade this rich meal for junk food? Why trade your Easter dinner for the fast food of this world that might taste appealing at the beginning, but leaves you going out the door asking, “Why did I eat that?” This rich meal of the Savior is the one that satisfies!

We see a couple more warnings as our text continues: *“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

What warnings do we see? **First, this is a limited time offer.** “Seek the Lord while he may be found.” There’s a story that’s been told about a meeting that was taking place among Satan and the demons. It was a meeting to discuss strategy for leading God’s people and people of the world away from the message of salvation. What could they do? One demon suggested, “How about if we try to convince people that you, Satan, are God? And that they should follow and worship you?” Satan thought for a moment, and then shook his head. No, that didn’t seem too convincing. Another demon chimed in, “How about if we try to convince people that Jesus was actually evil? That he should not be followed because of his evil nature?” Satan thought for a moment, and then shook his head. No, Jesus had done too many acts of compassion. Then a third demon spoke up, “How about if we just tell people that there’s no rush?” And Satan smiled. He knew that many could be convinced to just wait and to put off going to the banquet of the Lord and being concerned about spiritual things in the busyness of life. God’s offer is for a limited time!

Another warning we see is that repentance is needed. One of the words for “repentance” in the New Testament has the picture of having a “change in thinking.” In other words, a person sees the error of their ways and their thinking, confesses these sins to the Lord and through the Holy Spirit has had a change of thinking take place.

If you remember the story of The Prodigal Son in the New Testament, we see a clear example of this. He had strayed far from his

home. His sinful nature led him to leave and squander his inheritance in wild living and in prostitutes. What did it take in Jesus’ story for him to change his way of thinking? He wasted everything and had to hire himself out to a farmer and feed pigs, which were unclean animals to the Jews. And he was left sitting in the pig sty and wishing he could eat the slop that the pigs got to eat. Then, Jesus says, he came to his senses and resolved to go home. Every sinner, including everyone here today, must repent of their sinful ways to return to their Father’s house.

For those who come home, we see unbelievable grace extended. “Our God will freely pardon.” Look at the context of the next two verses (“My thoughts are not your thoughts...”). I’d imagine you’ve heard those verses quoted many times. Many of the times I’ve heard them quoted are when something bad is happening. Perhaps an accident or sickness occurs, and we must admit that God’s thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are higher than our ways. That is true, but do you see the context in which the Lord says this here? **He says this when speaking about his GRACE! His thoughts are not our thoughts, because his undeserved love, mercy, and grace are what he is about!**

Such thoughts are not like man’s thoughts. How does man’s sinful nature react when he is sinned against? We seem to have more and more instances of what they call “road rage.” Road rage happens when a driver wrongs another driver by cutting them off, passing them dangerously, or simply isn’t paying attention, and then the first driver takes action. He attacks with his vehicle or a weapon. He might even stop the other driver and attack him physically! This is the nature of sinful mankind when they are sinned against. What is God’s mind and his thoughts?

- Who would have thought that when the first sin was committed that God would be inclined to want to fix the problem of sin and forgive it, crushing the serpent’s head?

- Who would have thought that an elderly man and his childless wife could have a son named Isaac who would carry this promise?
- Who would have thought that God could preserve the nation of Israel's existence for centuries until the Savior came?
- Who would have thought that God would send his own Son?
- Who would have thought that God would allow his Son to suffer and die for the sin of the world?
- Who would have thought that on Easter Day God could bring about such a shocking turn of events and turn seeming defeat into victory?

Who would have thought? We could ask the same question of the Prodigal Son's father. **Who would have thought that when the son came home with his speech rehearsed and his life broken to shambles his father would interrupt this wayward son and joyfully announce his forgiveness? This is the mind of God!**

Our text concludes with a procession: *"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed."*

For the exiles, when they would process out of the land of Babylon, they would be headed home. What joy they would have! But obviously, this text has more far-reaching applications about going home. These blessings of forgiveness and eternal life that are sealed on Easter Day will cause the greatest homecoming ever. And we can't miss the feelings of joy that these verses exude. How joyful would the scene be? Even creation would join them in praise! This is reminiscent of Paul's words in the book of Romans where he describes creation as "groaning in the pains of childbirth" and waiting to be liberated from its decay, back to its original state of perfection.

We see this reversal in nature as *"Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow."* The "thorns and thistles" that came upon the Garden of Eden will be no more.

**"No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground.
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found..."**

This joyful procession and reversal of fortunes for nature culminate in the heavenly home that we are headed for.

On that first Easter Day there certainly was joy, but I wonder if those present grasped the full joy they actually could have. What was the greatest joy of the women? They saw the Lord alive. He had risen! He was back. This fact, though, led to bigger joys they could have that may not have dawned on them immediately. They could go home to heaven one day. Their eternal home was secure. Their graves would one day be empty also. For they would have a joyful, eternal homecoming in their future. One of the sad things about "going home" for someone who is grown up is that you can't stay there. If you visit the old homestead, you know you eventually have to go back to your new life and home. But in our eternal home, there will be no departure. **It will be our perfect home forever!**

As we close our look at Isaiah 55 today, I'd like to submit that you file this chapter away in your head as one of your favorites. Many of us remember Isaiah 53 well, the suffering Servant of the Lord. Many of us have even committed parts of that chapter to memory. But today, don't forget Isaiah 55. This wonderful chapter describes the blessings of the suffering Servant and the joyful homecoming that he has brought about.

There's no place like... HOME! Amen.