

Text: Isaiah 55: 1-9
Title: Seek The Lord

Date: March 7, 2010

Do you know which question I just hate to be asked? Now that question had different answers at different periods of my life. When I was a teenager, when a girlfriend would ask, "Can we talk?" everyone knew that heartbreak hotel was just around the corner. And in my younger married days, "Can we talk?" generally meant that the theoretical discussions we had regarding baby names were not going to be theoretical for that much longer. But I am at a different stage in my life and the question that I hate is, "What do you want for your birthday?" Not that I am Joe Simple Life turning my back on material things- it's just that I have enough stuff, and getting stuff for getting's doesn't make a whole lot of sense. If you think that I hate being asked the "what do you want?" question- put yourself in Lynne's shoes, because she is the one who is asking.

The days are long since past when my heart's delight was met in a new bicycle or toy. What would it take to satisfy your heart's delight? Love? Fame? Fortune? It's a harder question than you think, isn't it? To get handles on this, imagine yourself completely bereft. Everything you have has been taken away. Penniless. shelter less. Homeless. Alone. Everything. This is who Isaiah is writing to, at least the Isaiah starting in chapter 40. (the general consensus for the last 100 years or so is that you have 2 prophets, both named Isaiah- compare chapters 1-39 with what comes later and you will see what I mean...) Anyway, Isaiah' audience, those deep in the Babylonian exile know viscerally what we are talking about. They had lost everything, including hope. They were utterly disillusioned, for they thought that God would NEVER let them be conquered. And it didn't help that the first Isaiah had told them that is exactly what would happen if they didn't start living up to their end of the covenant.

But the tone changes starting in chapter 40. Instead of judgment, we hear promises of forgiveness. Instead of exile we now read of restoration and return. Our passage follows in kind. Come to the waters, you who are thirsty, come buy wine and milk for no money and for no price asked. Those who heard Isaiah knew exactly who he was addressing- those who have lost everything- them.

Isaiah's first question for them is one we can relate to. Why do you spend your time, waster your dreams, use all of your resources on stuff that cannot fulfill your heart's desire. And hasn't that always been the case with us? That no matter how much pride of ownership we may have in a particular thing- that after a while it no longer holds that place in our heart that it once did- and is not just treated like the rest of the stuff that we own? Isaiah's solution to this is simple. Dare to name your heart's desire, or better yet, dare God to name your heart's desire- and you will find it met beyond your wildest dreams.

So what is it? We are told in the last part of verse 3: I will make you a covenant- extending the one I made with David to you. We are used to thinking of God's covenant with Abraham or with Moses. The promise that God made to David is found in 2 Samuel 7, starting at verse 8:

8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; 9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. 12 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

We get hung up on God's promise to keep a descendent of David on the throne forever. In fact it was a misunderstanding of this promise that got to Judeans into trouble in the first place, figuring that no one would ever conquer them. Standing on this side of the resurrection, we know that the everlasting king and kingdom have everything to do with Jesus- but that is not the point that Isaiah is making here. God is recounting to David that he brought him out of nowhere and placed him on the throne so that he could be a witness to the actions of the Living God and that his name would be

significant forever. There it is- what we long for more than anything else is to have a life that matters, one that is significant, one that lived to the hilt. God promised that to David and delivered and now that same covenant promise is extended to us. As David sang of God's faithfulness and glories- so shall we. As God uses his life to draw people closer to the Kingdom- So will God use our lives to shed light where there is darkness. God helped David live a life that mattered- and God is going to do the same for us.

Ok then, so what do we do now, how do we react? Isaiah is clear: God is going to make your life significant, so if there are any obstacles that are standing between us and God, now is the time to tear them down. This is not a promise that if we get out acts straight that God will love us and use us. Just the opposite; if we admit to what we and God already know- that there are obstacles to our relationship, then God will forgive us and remove them. Here's the deal, we ALL have obstacles, disappointments, frustrations and broken and sharp edges that cut us up inside. It's part of being human- to pretend otherwise is foolish. This is the one requirement in the church that we admit our brokenness and seek healing and forgiveness. It's not like God doesn't already know them- so why bother to hide?

You know, even though our hearts desire is to live a significant life, I think we have a hard time admitting that. I don't know, maybe we think we will get swelled heads and God will punish us. We recall Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.* Every one of us has seen someone get what they so richly deserve. But Proverbs is talking about the person who has an inflated sense of self worth- Isaiah is telling us of God's sense of our worth. Besides, God doesn't think like us anyway, so let's stop assuming that God plays by our rules and notions of what makes someone significant.

Bottom line- it is God's choice that makes us significant. And God has chosen to work with us. We've just seen that in little Ryann's baptism. We celebrate God's calling her into his covenant family. We already know that God has blessed her, for He gave her to Andy and to Kerrie. We have made promises on behalf of the entire church to nurture her, educate her in the faith and to encourage her throughout her life. we've all had that internal "Awwww" moment when we've met her face to face- because she is as cute as a button. But do we stop and think that the same God who makes her significant

today has already made our lives significant. That we were someone else's "Awww" moment some years ago? That God has watched over us, has given us the promises of the Gospel and given us the faith in which to respond to those promises. Our significance is not so much rooted in what we are able to do but in what God has already done.

Which is why we come to this table. We recall that we have seen part of Isaiah's promise already come true: that our status before God is not based on we have done for God, but on what Jesus has done for us. We recall Jesus' life, his death, his resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. We reflect on our experience of being called and our being able to respond to God's claim on our lives- that significance promised to all who believe in Jesus Christ. So let us come to this table in thanksgiving, in prayer and in expectation as we live out Isaiah's promises together. Amen