

Fact Sheet for **“Several Vignettes”** **Isaiah 55:1-13**

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Isaiah 55 is a chapter with several short passages, each memorable and significant, but each seemingly too short to spend a sermon on in this series. So, I will do something I have never done before. I will focus on each of these vignettes briefly. Let's begin with their place in the book of Isaiah.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary places these in a section entitled, "The Generosity, Urgency, and Effectiveness of God's Word of Grace."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles this section, "Salvation for the Gentiles."

The Ryrie Study Bible – "The Invitation of Salvation" through the Servant

NLT Study Bible – "Invitation to the Lord's Salvation"

NKJV Study Bible – "An Invitation to Abundant Life", concluding a broader section "Oracles of Salvation and oracles concerning the Suffering Servant"

ESV Study Bible – "The Compassion of the Lord"

Matthew Henry – "Evangelical Invitations"

Here's the point. These vignettes are all invitations to come to God for salvation **and** everyday living. Although they are addressed to the nation of Israel in Isaiah's day these verses have been favorites of Christians in every nation.

Vignette #1 begins with words that have been put to song (55:1-2a), mostly from the KJV.

^{ESV} **Isaiah 55:1 ¶ "Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
3 Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
4 Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
5 Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.**

These verses speak both of the individual ("everyone") and the nation of Israel ("a nation... shall run to you). Notice that this invitation encompasses both salvation ("Come") and life ("listen diligently"). And, there are two promises for Israel (covenant & nations coming). (*But the opening words of this vignette can speak to everyone.*)

Vignette #2 continues in the same vein, but has two verses we often quote out of context.

⁶ **"Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
7 let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;**

**let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.**

**⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.**

**⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

This invitation is to the individual. "Seek the LORD while he may be found" is an invitation that extends through the ages. It is not only an invitation to salvation, but also to a life of serving God. We normally quote verses 8 and 9 in a theological sense, focusing on God's omniscience, his intelligence. For instance... when we have questions of God's choice of us vs. our choice of God... or when we have questions about the creation of the universe. But consider this. The words for "ways" and "thoughts" found in verses 8 & 9 are the same words found in verse 7. The contrast God makes is between the unrighteous ways and thoughts of man vs. God's righteous ways and thoughts. The context is not intelligence but righteousness.

Vignette #3 may seem different, but it is really not.

**¹⁰ "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there but water the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.**

Again, we quote verse 11 in more of a sanitized theological sense... "God will watch over his word." "God's purposes for his word will be accomplished." But the sense of this verse in context is... The things God has been saying so far in this book will certainly come true. God will judge sin and bless the righteous.

Vignette #4 again begins with words that have been put to music (verse 12).

**¹² "For you shall go out in joy
and be led forth in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall break forth into singing,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall make a name for the LORD,
an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."**

I am reminded of a passage in Romans (8:19-21).

All four of these vignettes speak the same message: "Seek God for both salvation and daily living" and "God will bless you both now and in eternity."

Here's what I find when I share the gospel with folks. I almost never encounter people who haven't gone to church with some regularity sometime in their lives, and then have stopped attending for some reason. Will ignoring these verses lead to God's blessing (Hebrews 10:24-25)? But, this is part of why God sent his word. Will choosing your own path in other areas, one that is different than what the Bible calls for, be acceptable to God? The next one is for our politically correct culture. Are there multiple ways to God? NO!

Seek God while he may be found!