

An Invitation We Cannot Refuse

Isaiah 55:1-13

“What we take into our memories and imaginations shapes us, alters the rhythms of breathing, speech, and heartbeat, affects in subtle and not-so-subtle ways the very life of the body.”

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre
in *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies*

The psalmist’s exclamation “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (119:103) invokes a metaphor so palpable, it assumes literal truth. We taste, and see that the Lord is good. The words that come to comfort in need or inspire in the breathless dark are food and drink indeed.

“Faith” is one of the Christian virtues—
“the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods.”
C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Second Isaiah

Isaiah 40-55

“For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert . . . A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way—a protected place—a safe place—where the redeemed shall walk . . .and come to Zion with singing. . .” in Isaiah 35

Between Isaiah 39 and 40

A “great pause” – a span of almost 160 years

“By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our harps. How could we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”
(from Psalm 137).

“Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins. . .”

“Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings, lift up your voice with strength. . . . say to the cities of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’”

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning?”

“Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. . . .”

3 Questions

- What does this work invite me to do?
- What does it require of me?
- What does it not let me do?

¹ Ho, everyone who thirsts,
 come to the waters;
 and you that have 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 labour for that which does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
 and delight yourselves in rich food.

“Come”
 “Listen”
 “Incline your ear”
 “See”
 “Seek”

³ Incline your ear, and come to me;
 listen, so that you may live.
 I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
 my steadfast, sure love for David.
⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander for the peoples.
⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
 and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
 because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the Lord while he may be found,
 call upon him while he is near;
⁷ let the wicked forsake their way,
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;
 let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them,
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 nor are your ways my ways, says 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.

“In fact, divine purpose is to be discerned on a cosmic scale, since humanity and creation in their entirety unfold with one drama, a drama ultimately redemptive but on the way toward that goal entailing judgment and the persistent threat of chaos.”

Paul Hanson

¹⁰ For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered 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 succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

¹² For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
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 be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

“Believing people (Jews and Christians) . . . dare to imagine that the same Holy One who acted in that time and place in disruptive and embracing ways still continues to disrupt and embrace even now.”

Walter Brueggemann

- Brueggemann calls the poems of Second Isaiah a summons to faith that Yahweh be relied upon in every circumstance of life.
- The gospel [the good news] to be received in faith is an offer of comfort in the midst of every crisis.

