

The Market Place

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help this morning, turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of the prophet Isaiah, chapter 55.

And if we read again, verse 1. Isaiah, chapter 55, verse 1. O everyone that thirsts, come to the waters, and he that has no money, come, buy and eat.

Yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. In the past week, you could say, we've heard a lot on the news about the economic climate of not only Britain, and not only Europe, but also the whole world.

Because we heard on Wednesday afternoon, I don't know if you were watching the news at night, that China's miracle economy, which had been growing at a rapid rate for the past 30 years, it suddenly took a massive nosedive, in which the stock market completely plummeted.

And analysis say that the effect of that crash, it could be worldwide, because it's the largest economy of the largest country in the world, and it could have this global effect.

[1 : 32] But then there's also the ongoing crisis in Greece. Everybody's seen it. Everybody knows it's going on. We've heard so much about it in recent days. And their difficulty is not that they have this plummeting economy.

They don't seem to have an economy at all, because they are in severe amounts of debt, which is owed to countries that are all part of the European Union, and they're on the verge of bankruptcy. But then if we come a little closer to home, to our own home shores, this week we were given the budget of a Conservative Parliament from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne. And even though everyone is supposedly to get a pay rise and taxes are going to come down, there are going to be cuts in other forms of spending in order to meet the shortfall, as they say.

Because as we know, our economic climate, we are barely out of recession. We're still billions of pounds in debt, and years away from any possible thought of economic stability and certainty.

[2 : 37] But even at a moment's notice, we know that anything could happen. The price of oil could drop again. We could break out with a war. The banks could be in crisis again.

The stock market could crash. Anything could happen. Anything could happen. And when we look at it, even on a global scale, we are confronted with nothing but economic instability.

Nothing is certain. But the root cause of it all is greed. Greed. Was it not Jesus who said, the love of money, the root of all evil?

But I'm not going to pretend to you that I know everything about the economy. I don't have a clue about it. And that I even have the faintest idea of understanding what they're talking about. But what I do know, and as everybody else knows, is that you cannot live out with your means.

You cannot live out with your means. Or else we'll be in debt and completely bankrupt. But when we come to the Bible, that's the message it has for us.

[3 : 47] That's our condition. The message of the Bible is that, spiritually speaking, we are in debt. We are completely bankrupt. We have no money.

We have no assets. We have no shares in any stock market. We have no possessions. The bailiffs have come. They have stripped everything from us. Our spiritual bank account is completely wiped out.

Where we've been left poverty stricken and utterly helpless and in need of charity. That's our economic condition when it comes to our spiritual well-being.

The Bible tells us that we are ruined. We're bust. Broke. Poor. Penniless. Destitute. Whatever word you want to use, the Bible says that the spiritual economy of our soul has totally crashed.

And it crashed way back in the Garden of Eden when sin first entered into the world. Where all mankind who had enjoyed the riches of God's grace.

[4 : 53] But then mankind fell. Their spiritual economy had crashed and fell into crisis. And the debt was so high and the poverty so deep that mankind was incapable and powerless to balance the books.

And the result was that our righteousness, which we had, was replaced with unrighteousness. Grace was replaced with sin. Life replaced with death.

And the only way to pay the debt and redeem the losses was by way of transfer. The only way. Mankind needed this great transaction.

Mankind needed their economic market to be restored. And that's what Isaiah is presenting to us. He's presenting to us in this well-known chapter a debt-free, fully paid, spiritually viable market. And the opportunity to have all our debts cleared and to go from rags to riches. It's freely offered to us at this marketplace.

[6 : 03] And God's prophet, God's salesman, his spokesman, Isaiah, he wants to tell us that God himself is inviting us to come to this marketplace and embrace this free offer.

And such is the urgency of this offer that Isaiah uses three imperatives, three necessities that are needed in order to respond to our spiritual bankruptcy.

Three words that are used to emphasize his plea in order to respond to this free offer. And the three imperatives, the three necessities are come, listen, seek.

Come, listen, seek. And that's what I'd like us to consider this morning as we look at these words together. That Isaiah is pleading with us to come, listen, and seek.

So if we look first of all at his plea, come. He says in verse 1, Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters.

[7 : 16] And he that has no money, come. Buy and eat. Yea, come. Buy wine and milk without money and without price. And by reading this opening verse, it's safe to say that Isaiah was much more than just God's prophet.

Because in this chapter, Isaiah is portrayed to us as God's evangelist. He is a herald of the truth. He's a preacher of the gospel. And his role is to present the provision to our poverty in and through Jesus Christ.

And for an Old Testament prophet, Isaiah proclaimed so much about Jesus Christ that when reading this book, you'd be certain that he saw everything take place.

Isaiah, but he was writing 800 years before the events of Jesus. And yet Isaiah wrote about his birth and the anointing and the ministry, the rejection, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection, the kingship of Jesus Christ.

He wrote it. He wrote about everything. About Jesus Christ. So much so that this book has often been referred to as the fifth gospel. But in this plea, this call to come, in the opening verses of Isaiah 55, they arise out of a greater context within this book, within this fifth gospel, you could say.

[8 : 48] Because back only in chapter 52, chapter 52, the Lord gave Isaiah this commission, this summoning, to all those in the community to pay attention.

And he does so with this startling words, awake, awake, awake, he's saying, wake up, wake up. And those words of Isaiah, he's calling them, calling people who have fallen asleep, he's calling them to wake up.

because he wants them to pay attention. He wants us to sit up and take note of what's going on around us. He wants us to take note of the fact that our condition is one of spiritual bankruptcy. And that our bankruptcy has caused us to be sold off into slavery. Because we're now slaves to sin. We're in bondage to sin. We are in slavery.

And it's only going to bring us into spiritual death. But, says Isaiah, but, God has promised that there will be a redemption.

[9 : 56] There will be a transaction, in which one will die in the place of sinners. So that our debt will be paid. And as we now move into chapter 53, Isaiah says, who's going to believe this report anyway?

Who's going to believe this report? Who's going to believe this wonderful provision? Who will believe that God will provide a redemption? That he's going to balance the books and pay the debt? Who's going to believe that God will provide the greatest transfer? And it will be the transfer of the righteous for the unrighteous. The pure for the impure.

The saviour for the sinner. And Isaiah, he's saying, who's going to believe this? But he brings us all the way to the cross. And he says, look, look, here's Calvary's great transaction taking place.

Because in that transaction of Calvary, he bore our griefs. He carried our sorrows. He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

[11 : 00] He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him. With his stripes, we are healed.

He was led as the lamb to the slaughter. He was cut out of the land of the living. His soul was made an offering for sin. He who knew no sin became sin for us so that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

He did it all. He paid our debt. He set us free. He balanced the books. He covered our sin. He brought us from darkness into his most marvellous light, from rags to riches.

And he did it all on our behalf. On our behalf. And Isaiah is asking, who is going to believe this report?

Who is going to believe this? Who is going to believe that God has done this marvellous thing? Are you going to believe it?

[12 : 10] Are you going to believe it? That God has done this marvellous thing? Because he has. Are you going to believe it? But then Isaiah, he brings us into chapter 54.

And he's left us asking, well, who has done this for us? Who did this for us? Who paid the debt that he didn't owe? And who died?

And who paid the debt that, well, I owed it, but he paid it. Who's done this? Who has done this for me? And Isaiah says, the Lord of hosts is his name.

And he is your redeemer. He has redeemed you. He has called you. And this is what your redeemer says. You don't need to be afraid. You don't need to be ashamed.

With everlasting kindness, I have had mercy upon you. And therefore, with all that said, all the context looked at, with everything done, with your debt paid, your ransom secured, the books balanced, Isaiah comes into chapter 55 and he says, come, just come.

[13 : 21] And in this chapter, he puts out the invitation, puts it out to everyone, that this salvation, which is freely offered to everyone, to whosoever.

But Isaiah is not just offering this invitation. He's pleading with us. He is pleading. He's pleading with us to accept this invitation, to come and embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

And to continue the theme, that, of the context of buying back, and the theme of paying a debt, the language which Isaiah uses here in this chapter, is the language of redemption.

He's trying to create the familiar picture in our minds, of a marketplace. I'm sure we've all been to the marketplace before, where they're buying and selling all the stalls, are there.

The place is full. But this marketplace, and at Isaiah's stall, salvation has been offered. That's all that's on offer for him.

[14 : 34] And the picture which we are given of the marketplace, is a picture full of people. Full of people. Crowds of people there. It's a busy place. And there's lots going on.

People who are buying and selling their goods. And there are others down there, and they're all at the market looking for a good bargain. And all the stalls, everyone is at their stalls, and they're all calling to the crowds, to come and buy from them.

Come and part with your money, in order to get the best products that they are selling. But as all the crowds pass by Isaiah's gospel stall, Isaiah wants to attract their attention.

And he wants to highlight the importance of what's available on his stall. So he stands up and he shouts, Ho! Ho!

And Isaiah, he attracts the attention to himself. And he says to the passing crowds, Come.

Everyone who thirsts, Come.

[15 : 38] Come to the waters. And he that has no money, Come. Buy. And eat. Yea, Come. Wine and milk without money, without price.

And Isaiah is saying, Come. Come. Come. He says, You don't need your money. Put away your wallet. Put away your purse. Put them away, because the debt is already paid.

The price has already been settled. The bill has already been covered. It's all done for you.

Salvation is available to you.

And it's available for nothing. Nothing. It's free. Absolutely. 100% free. There's no price tag.

There's no need to transact money. No need for the chip and pin. Because this offer of salvation, it's a free offer. Free offer. It's without restriction. It's an open offer.

[16 : 37] It's available. It's complimentary. It's on the house. It's free of charge. It's without charge. It's at no cost to you. Call it what you will. It's yours for the taking.

It's yours for the taking. So come. Come. Come. Come. And what Isaiah says to us is, if you want it, come and get it.

If you want it, come and get it. If you're thirsty for this life-giving water of salvation, then come. Come. If you know deep down in your heart that Jesus Christ is the only one that will ever satisfy the longing of your soul and your deepest desires, then come.

Come. Come without your money. Come without any charge. Just come. Just come. You don't need to have read the Bible from cover to cover.

You just come. You don't need to know the catechism and all the theology of the Bible before you come. You just come. You don't need to dress in a certain way or pray in a certain manner or adopt a certain posture or have attended church all your life.

[17 : 56] Just come. Just come. Whatever you do, but whatever you do, don't stay away. Don't stay away.

Don't stay away from this wonderful offer of the gospel. Don't stay away. Just come. Just come. But what makes this so hard for us to accept?

What makes it hard for us to accept the free offer of salvation is that we have some twisted premonition within us that we think we have to do something.

We think we have to do something. We think we have to pay something. We think that we have to give something. We think that we have to do some form of works in order to be saved, in order for Jesus to look at me.

My friends, stop thinking. Stop thinking about it. Just come. Come and confess your unworthiness for what Jesus has done.

[19 : 02] Come and confess your thankfulness for what Jesus has done. Come and confess your love for Jesus for what he has done on your behalf. On your behalf.

And you know, my friend, that's the plea of the entire Bible. Come. The prophets say, Come. Now, let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be made like wool. White.

Jesus says, Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your soul.

Jesus says, He that comes to me, I will in no way cast out. The Spirit and the Bride, right at the end of the Bible, say, Come. The Holy Spirit pleads with us.

[20 : 03] Come. The church and the plea, which the church has been entrusted with, is, Come.

And all those who follow the Lord, every Christian, every member, those who are Christians, Christians, the Bible, says that our responsibility, is to plead with others.

Come. And the last word, of this holy book, that is spoken, and speaks to your soul, says, Whosoever will, let him come, take of the water of life, freely.

The message is clear. Come. Everyone is pleading with you. Come. Everyone is pleading. Take this salvation, which is freely offered to you.

And what's clear, it won't come to you. It won't just fall into your lap. You have to come and take it. You have to come and take it. If you want it, come and get it. The responsibility lies with you.

[21 : 15] Jesus has done everything. All you need to do is come. Come. Come. Come. That's the first necessity.

The invitation of the gospel. The second is listen. Listen. He says in verses 2 and 3, Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance.

Incline your ear, and come unto me. Hear, and your soul shall live.

And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. As the crowds passed by, they all passed by Isaiah's gospel stall, and Isaiah had attracted their attention to what's on offer, and what's available at his stall, and he's pleading for them to come and freely receive what's on offer.

But now we see that this prophetic salesman, he pleads with his audience that they will listen to him. He's attracted their attention. He's aroused their interest.

[22 : 31] But now Isaiah wants his audience to give them his full, undivided attention. And the first thing Isaiah does is, he asks his audience a question.

He cuts right to their heart by asking, why they don't respond to the free offer of the gospel? Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?

Why do you spend your life working for that which does not satisfy? And Isaiah asks his question because he can see that his audience, physically, they have plenty of money.

There's no sign of bankruptcy, no sign of being in debt, but their pockets are full. They have an abundance of wealth. And they've come to the marketplace to spend their money and acquire more and more.

But Isaiah's telling them, you'll be back next week. And you'll be back the week after that. And the week after that. And the reason you'll be back is because you'll never be satisfied.

[23 : 38] You'll never be content with your spending. You'll continue to thirst more and more. And you'll continue to hunger for that which does not satisfy.

And your only problem in life is that, is what concerns you. And what concerns your mind. You think you'll never have enough money.

You'll never have enough. And what's missing in your life? Money. That's why so many people are obsessed with playing the lottery.

They want more money. They never have enough money. They never have enough bread. They're not content. They're not satisfied. They're not happy. They'll do all the overtime they can.

Every hour they can. Climb the highest ladder of the career. The career ladder. To be the best. To some extent, my friend, there's nothing wrong with that.

[24 : 37] There's nothing wrong with working hard. But Isaiah is asking us, what's it all for? What's it all for? In the grand scheme of things.

Why are you laboring and working so hard in your life? And causing yourself so much grief. Maybe even pain. He's not saying that there's anything wrong with working. It's good to work.

It's good to have a job. Good to provide for your family. But he's saying, what's it all about? What's it all about? What's it for? Is it just for the bigger and better house?

The better car? The better holiday? The better retirement? Put the kids through university. What's it all about? What's it all for? Why are you laboring for that which does not satisfy?

Why are you pouring your life into things that have no inner nourishment and no lasting benefit?

And Isaiah is asking us, what about eternity?

[25 : 36] What about eternity? What about it? Why are you focusing upon your whole life and consumed with everything around you and pouring your energies into making yourself something in this life?

But you're forgetting about eternity. You're forgetting about eternity. Because as you focus your whole life on all these things around you, your mind is filled with them.

But not eternity. And that before God, you are completely bankrupt. Still bankrupt. And that you're spiritually indebted to God because you know that you've sinned and fallen short.

And you cannot pay the debt which is owed. And what will all these things, these things that you have, what will they serve you in eternity? Where is the benefit in trying to cling to them?

Because you can't take them with you. What good will they do when you stand before God and give an account? You may think that you'll say to God, I was hard working.

[26 : 53] I was faithful in my job. I was a good steward with my money. I gave to the church. I gave to charity. I took care of my family. I looked after my neighbours.

I did all these things. But the greatest problem with each and every one of them is that they all begin with I.

I, I, I. And God is asking us, what about what I did? What about what I did?

What about my son? What about Calvary? What about the debt that has been cleared for you?

What about the free offer of salvation that has been heralded before you? What did you do with that?

What about the gift of eternal life? What about the gospel that has been presented to you again and again? What about all that you've heard? All the times that you've been pleaded with to come?

[27 : 53] Why do you spend your money on that which is not bread? Why do you spend your life working for that which does not satisfy?

Why? Why, he's asking. Why? Why? Why? And you know, I know that there are many of you in here who have heard this all before.

You've heard it all before. In fact, you've probably heard it for years. Maybe you've heard it since you were children. Sitting in these pews. But now as the years roll on, life has taken its toll. You know that you're not as young as you used to be. Your strength isn't what it used to be. Your health isn't what it used to be. And you're getting closer and closer to eternity.

And you know it. And you know, I was only thinking the other day that if the Lord spares me the length of my ministry, I'll be spared 40 years.

[29 : 14] And if the Lord keeps me here in Barvis for that duration, I will bury most of you.

I will bury most of you. And I say that with a heavy heart. I say it with a heavy heart because I know that most of you aren't prepared for eternity.

You aren't prepared. You're still trying to be satisfied by the things of this world. But it's only when you realize that you're bankrupt, completely empty, that you see that nothing satisfies anymore. That's when you'll seek the Lord. And if you feel empty this morning, empty knowing that there is nothing that is bringing you the satisfaction that you want, that you crave, and that you can see the emptiness and the futility of this life and living your life without Christ, then it's a sure sign that the Lord is working in your life and that the Lord is calling you to respond.

He's calling you. He's pleading. That's when Isaiah is saying, listen carefully to me. Eat what is good. Let your soul delight itself in abundance.

[30 : 41] Incline your ear. Come to me and listen. Hear and your soul shall live. Three times Isaiah is repeatedly pleading with us to hear and respond to the call.

Because the call to hear is not only a call to listen, it's also a call to understand, to hear with understanding, to respond appropriately.

Because when we hear with understanding, we must obey the command of the call. We need to hear and understand and obey the command to come. As I not hope we saw a few weeks ago when we were looking at the parable of the sower.

When Jesus began telling the parable, he began with a call to listen. He said to his congregation, listen, listen. Behold, a sower went out to sow.

And what Jesus was saying was, listen and respond with an open heart. Be the open heart that you need to be. Hear and you shall live.

[31 : 52] And then Jesus concluded the parable with another call. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And we're told that Jesus often spoke with parables in order to preach the word to his congregation as they were able to hear it.

Because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So my friend, the only way for your soul to live, the only way for you to possess eternal life, the only way to be saved from eternal death in hell, the only way is to respond to this free offer of salvation.

My friend, are you listening? Are you listening? Are you hearing? Are you understanding this? Do you understand the seriousness? And the serious nature of this offer of salvation?

That without it, your end will be destruction in hell. But, this invitation of eternal salvation, it's there if you want it.

There if you want it. Freely offered to you. It's yours for the taking. No strings attached. No small print. It's a full, free offer of salvation.

[33 : 15] But it's up to you to do something about it. Here, and your soul shall live. Ignore it. Your soul will live.

It will live in hell. It's your choice. It's your choice. It's your choice. But before you make your final decision, Isaiah has one last plea to make about this offer of salvation.

He's pleaded for us to come, to listen. Isaiah's last plea is seek. Seek, he says in verse 6, seek the Lord while he may be found.

Call upon him while he is near. God's prophetic salesman knows that this gospel message, this gospel offer, it's far too good and far too precious to throw away.

He knows that it's too good an opportunity to waste and ignore and put off until a later date. So he pleads one more time, seek the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near.

[34 : 36] And it seems to me that Isaiah won't give up. He won't stop pleading. He won't stop until you submit. He won't stop asking until you respond.

He won't stop coming to you and urging you and pleading with you to come to Christ. And you know my friend, either will I. Either will I. This message of salvation, message of a debt-free, fully paid salvation is far too precious to simply let it pass us by.

And as long as God spares me, I'll be here every week. proclaiming this message and preaching this truth. This truth that there is yet room.

This truth that you are to be compelled to come in. This truth that there is a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned. This truth that now is the accepted time.

Today is the day of salvation. Now is the time to come. Not tomorrow. Not later. Not when you're older. Not when you're at a death store and on your deathbed.

[35 : 47] Now is the time. Now. My friend, your greatest need, and I wish you could see it, is to seek the Lord. You need to seek the Lord and accept this offer of salvation.

You need to come now. Because we're reminded here that this gospel will not always be offered to us. We won't always be under the sound of it.

This call to hear will not always be there. This plea to seek will not always be presented to us. Because the day is coming, he says.

The day is coming. And it's coming all too quickly for us. The day is coming when we'll be taken from this life into eternity. My friend, we only have the opportunity to seek the Lord in this life.

There are no other opportunities after this one. We can only seek the Lord while he may be found. We can only seek him while the day of opportunity lasts.

[36 : 55] We can only seek the Lord while it is day. For the night is coming when no one will seek him. We can only seek the Lord while we are in the realm of time. Of time.

But time is not on our side. My friend, time is running out. The clock is ticking.

The sand is falling. And time is short. Time is short. Time is short. This is an urgent plea to seek the Lord now.

No more running. No more putting it off. No more. None of this till later on. You need to seek him while he may be found.

You need to seek him whilst the gospel is in your hearing. You need to seek him whilst you're still on mercy's ground. You need to seek him whilst you have breath in your lungs.

[37 : 56] You need to seek him before death will leave you and judgment will find you and eternity will hold you. You need to seek him. You need to seek him.

And when you seek him. When you seek him. It's not if. I don't want any ifs in here. I want all whens.

When you seek him. Because if you do not seek him. Isaiah isn't giving us another option. There's no other alternatives to this offer.

When you seek him. The promise is you will find him. Ask and it will be given.

Seek and you will find. Knock the door will open. That's the promise. That's the promise.

[39 : 02] Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon him while he is near. And this Jesus he is very near.

Very near. Because once again at the marketplace of the gospel Jesus is passing by. Passing by before us.

And he wants you to respond. He wants you to listen. He wants you to respond to him. Everything has been done for you. Everything has been accomplished.

The debt has been paid. The price has been met. All that is required of you. Come. Listen. Seek. The invitation has now gone out. It's gone out. You've been urged to come. You've been pleaded with to listen.

[40 : 03] You've been asked to seek. How will you respond? How will you respond? You may have rejected it in the past.

But today is another opportunity. Today is another chance to seek the Lord. Today is another occasion to hear the gospel. Today is another opportunity to come to Christ because today is the day of salvation.

salvation. All I can do is plead. Come. Listen. Seek.

Come. Listen. Seek. How will you respond to this great offer? May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we are unworthy of the least of thy mercies, but we thank and praise thee today that this offer to us is a free offer.

[41 : 09] It is there for us, and Lord, we plead all that those who are still strangers to thee, those who are still in their bankruptcy of sin, that they would come and see the riches, the unsearchable riches, that are able to be found in Jesus Christ.

Lord, bless us, we plead. May thy word be as thou hast promised, that I would not return to thee empty, but accomplish that in the thing whereto thou hast sent it.

And, O Lord, that I would truly be the arrow from the king to pierce the heart. Cleanse us then, we plead, and do us good for Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall conclude by singing in Psalm 27.

Psalm 27 in the Sing Psalms version. It's on page 32. Psalm 27 from verse 7 down to the verse marked 11.

What a prayer. Lord, hear me when I call to you. Be merciful and speak. Come, seek my face, you told my heart. Your face, Lord, I will seek. Oh, do not hide your face from me, and do not turn aside your servant in your righteous wrath, for you have been my guide.

[42 : 41] Oh, God, my Saviour, leave me not. Do not reject my plea. My parents may forsake me, Lord, but you will welcome me. Teach me, O Lord, how I should live, and lead me in your way.

Make straight my path, because my foes oppress me every day. These verses, and we'll stand to sing to God's praise. Amen. Lord, hear hear me when I call to you.

Be merciful and speak. Come, see my face, you told my heart.

Your face for die will see. Oh, do not hide your face from me, and do not turn aside your servant a finger writer's rock.

For you have been my guide. Oh, God, my Saviour, leave me not.

[44 : 28] Do not reject my plea. My parents may forsake me, Lord, but you will welcome me.

Teach teach me, O Lord, how I should live, and lead me in your way.

Make straight my path because my blows. O prays me every day.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.