

Isaiah 55:1-5

- ¹ “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.
- ² 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.
- ³ 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.
- ⁴ See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander of the peoples.
- ⁵ Surely you will summon nations you know not,
and nations that do not know you will hasten to you,
because of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has endowed you with splendor.”

A FREE LUNCH

You are pretty well trained, I hope, on how to proceed in the following scenarios. You are on your computer, when a screen pops up that says, “Congratulations, you are the 1 millionth person to load this page. You win a free laptop computer – Click here to claim your prize. (Close the window) How about this one? The phone rings, it’s an robo call telling you that you are in for the deal of your lifetime. A free vacation to Hawaii!! What do you do there? (Hang Up) Your are opening the mail and you see the letter from Publisher’s Clearing House. You just won a million dollars!! What do you do with that? (Junk mail) Your hesitation stems from an old adage that is almost always true. “There no such thing as a free lunch.”

By and large the saying stands. You don’t get things for free. Generally speaking there aren’t people that are just itching to give you things that they have paid for. Unless they want something from you in return, they probably aren’t going to invest in you just for the sake of being nice. They might try to rope you in with hidden offers or fine print rules. “Get a free pair of shoes (with the purchase of a more expensive pair)”, “Free Admission, (with two paid admissions)” “Free cell phone (with a 2 year activation.)” There’s no such thing as a free lunch!

But Jesus doesn’t buy into that saying. He doesn’t believe it and came to earth to prove it. Today we’ve heard and we continue to hear that with Jesus, there is such a thing as **A Free Lunch**. He proved it when he walked our earth, he proved it 700 before through the pen of Isaiah, and he continues to prove it today as he encourages people to feast on his grace. Today let’s “dig in” and receive the nourishment and strength that Jesus intends for us to receive from His **Free Lunch**.

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In the gospel today, Jesus gave out a free lunch. He gave a free lunch to 5,000 men. And that's just the men. Give each of those men a wife and two kids and you're going to need place settings for 20,000 people. That was a thought that scared the disciples, but it didn't scare Jesus. He had them sit in groups of fifty and proceeded to serve them **Free Lunch**. But that was the second best free meal that they received that day. The better meal was the one they feasted on earlier as Jesus preached to them his words of forgiveness and his words of grace. As Jesus preached to them, he announced to them God's plan of salvation and the free gift of everlasting life that was theirs through faith in his promises. Jesus served them a more satisfying meal as he gave them his very words of life.

And it's the second kind of meal that God is presenting through his prophet Isaiah in the words that are before us today. It's soul food that God wants to share that's why Isaiah records God's call to all people. ***"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.***

The vendor walks up and down the aisles of the stadium, eager to sell his hotdogs, his nachos, or his beer to anyone who is willing to buy it. He knows he won't do very well keeping his mouth shut. He knows that it is not a good sales strategy to just smile and point to his sign. People need to know what he's got – so he needs to call out "Beer Here" "Get your Nachos, I got Nachos" "Ice Cold Soda for Sale" he needs to call out so that people will hear so that they can buy.

That's the way it is with God. That's why God isn't quiet about his grace. He does just smile and wave and hope that we come find out. He calls us to his side. "Come, Thirsty Ones, I got your water right here!!" "Who needs wine, who needs milk? I got it!!" Our God calls us so that we can see what he has to offer.

But his goods aren't over priced like stadium food. His food is much more reasonable. It's free. ***you who have no money, come, buy and eat!***
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

If you want to eat at the stadium or at the fair, you better take plenty of cash, but if we want to buy what God is selling, we don't have to bring anything at all. We can buy his grace without any cost. Something that comes to you at no cost is free – it's a gift and that's what grace really is – undeserved love. It's free and it's for everyone. You don't have to be this tall to ride the ride. You don't have to wear the right clothes, or know the secret password to be invited into the dinner. It's for everyone and that's why God calls out the invitation. That's why God tells the world to ***come, buy and eat.***

Do you remember learning how to eat at fancy restaurants? I don't remember that because I never learned. To this day, if I see more than one fork sitting next to the plate I begin to sweat a little bit. Fancy restaurants make me a little nervous. I'm always afraid I'm going to eat the wrong thing in the wrong order with the wrong utensil. It's not very relaxing for me. But God tells us how to eat his food and drink his fine drinks. He tells us something that you'd have never guessed. We are supposed to eat his food with our ears!!!

***Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.***

³ ***Give ear and come to me;
hear me, that your soul may live.***

It's pretty easy. There aren't unwritten rules to follow. There's no standard way to do it. We feast as we listen to God's Words of gospel and allow the Holy Spirit turn them into faith strengthening food for

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our souls. It's that simple. Listen to God and he will continue the feast. It's all pretty straightforward, but it's really hard to put into practice in everyday life. We know that God will feed us, but how often don't we listen to the call of our peers over the call of God. We feast on their opinions of us and are more concerned about listening to them than on listening to God. We listen to the voice in our head that tells us we are too busy for hearing the Lord and before you know it our Bible is getting pretty dusty on the shelf and Bible studies feasts held weekly at church aren't really a priority anymore. No one ignores the voice in their body that tells them they are thirsty or hungry. They go and satisfy the hunger with food and the thirst with a drink, but too often we ignore God's call to feast on his Word. We allow the call of our soul to go unanswered for far too long. We know how simple it is to hear the Word of God and we know that God will do all the work to cause our faith to grow, but we still foolishly avoid the table of God's rich grace and chose instead to feast on the sinful things that we think will satisfy, but will always leave us wanting more.

When Jesus was a boy, his parents found him in the temple. He was learning from the priests and teachers there. He was feasting on his Father's love. And we can be glad that he did. Jesus always feasted on the Word of God. He always gave God the glory in everything that he did. He always had the right priorities and ate the right type of food. He did that for you. He lived that way for you, so that we could be forgiven for our unhealthy eating habits, so that we could be forgiven for the times that we feast on the pleasures of this world and leave the food that truly satisfies untouched. Jesus lived in our place so that we could be forgiven for our failures and for our faults. He lived that perfect life so that he could offer it to our Father as our payment for sin. He lived a perfect life so that it would be innocent blood that he shed on the cross, so that it would be a sinless life that was offered in our place and that his perfection could be offered in our place. He died on the cross so that he could exchange his holiness for our sin. He hung on the tree so that our death could be exchanged with his life. He gave us himself, so that we could be his forever. He did all that so that we could feast on his love forever. He did it so that the feasting here could turn into a heavenly banquet.

At the rummage sale, there is a box at the end of the row of tables and it's marked "Free." It could just as easily be marked "junk" right? In it is a coloring book with all the pages colored in, a kid's toy that is missing an arm and a leg, dad's old lawn mowing TV shirt, a skateboard with two missing wheels, and some blank cassette tapes for recording your favorite music into a "mix tape". Usually if someone doesn't want it for themselves it's not very valuable. But the **Free Lunch** that God offers us today is just the opposite. It's the most precious thing we will ever see. Its price would be far greater than we would ever be able to pay, but Jesus paid the price so that we could eat. And not only can we eat but we can honor God as we do it. As we hear his Word, it's not just for our benefit, it's for God's. As we set aside time to spend with him, we are showing him the value that he has for us. As we prioritize our meals with Jesus, God is pleased. We have an opportunity to grow ourselves and to bring glory to God. What an awesome meal!!! God is pleased when we eat, and he is pleased when we bring others to eat as well. God is pleased when parents read Bible stories with their children. When they do so, they are spreading out a feast before them. God is pleased when we invite others to the feast. Maybe that's inviting them to church. Maybe it's studying the Bible with them or offering to help them through their questions. Maybe it's letting them know about the Bible study opportunities here at church or inviting them to a Bible Information Class. There is plenty to eat, that why God continues to call us and others to his side to feast on his grace.

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In this world, there may not be such a thing as a **Free Lunch**. We might get skeptical if someone tries to offer us something for free. But there's no reason to be skeptical of God's **Free Lunch**. There's no reason to doubt his intentions or question his motives. He wants us to eat a satisfying meal of forgiveness and grace. He wants us to eat his free food here on earth and to feast with him forever in the banquet halls of heaven. And we can dig in, all thanks to Jesus. Heed God's call and eat his **Free Lunch** as often as you can. Amen.