
The sermon text for today is based on the Isaiah, Chapter 55, Verses 1:9

Provided by The Lutheran Church of Australia

Come to the Lord, who is merciful

The two texts for today's sermon are our Old Testament reading from Isaiah 55 and our Gospel reading from Luke 13. The theme is turning to God and our outline is as follows:

The invitation is to come

The lesson is to repent

The response is mercy

Isaiah writes "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 simple invitation of God to each and every one of us is to come to him for every good thing, to come to him in good times and bad, to come to him to taste and see that the Lord is good. I wonder if your mum or dad ever used to stand at the back door and ring a bell or call you in for dinner. This is the kind of invitation we have in Isaiah 55.

Isaiah wants us to know that we have a gracious God, an inviting God who regularly throughout the Bible and throughout our lives calls us to come, to come and listen to him, to come and learn from him, to come and live our lives with him and it doesn't matter who we are, what our upbringing, where we've been, what we've done, our financial status, our social status, all the things that matter so much to the world simply don't matter to God.

The prophet Isaiah calls out and invites all people to come and be fed by God at his banquet. The only prerequisite according to Isaiah is need, hunger, thirst, the recognition that we don't have it all together, we do have deficiencies, we do need help the text continues Why spend money on what is not bread and your labour on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me and eat what is good and you will delight in the richest of fare. We labour, we work, we put great effort into trying to overcome our deficiencies and satisfy our needs for meaning, for purpose, for answers, for direction, for redemption, for wisdom and God says, 'Come these are the very things I want to give you.' "Come"—that's the invitation. What is our response? I am calling it repentance—and repentance is about more than confessing sin or saying sorry.

That's part of it but repentance simply means turning back to God, changing our heart and mind and direction back to God. It's like the RSVP to the invitation of God. Many of us

struggle to attend to the requirement of the RSVP. We like to either leave it to the last minute or only once we've been prompted or sometimes not at all.

But when it comes to the invitation of God, Isaiah has some advice. He says Seek the LORD while he may be found, call on him while he is near. Invitations aren't forever, time runs out, the event rolls around, so Isaiah's encouragement is, don't delay, there is some urgency about taking up this invitation of God.

Our Gospel reading alludes to this when it gives us two different examples of really horrible things that happened In Jesus' day, the reaction it caused, and the lesson Jesus says we can learn from it. They're particularly relevant examples, given everything that is going on in our world at the moment.

The first is a number of Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. What that probably means is they were worshipping in the temple, offering sacrifices and Pilate or his soldiers came in, and for whatever reason there was a massacre of worshippers. Sounds familiar doesn't it?

The second example is the tower of Siloam, not far from that temple in Jerusalem, which had fallen, and eighteen people were killed in the collapse.

Now those who come to talk to Jesus about these things, come with an assumption. A worldly assumption of human logic that these people must have done something really bad if this happened to them. Many today would say the reason is karma.

'What goes around comes around' is their thinking. But Jesus says that's not how it is.

There are holes in this logic. It's inadequate, it doesn't help and a lot of human responses to tragedy are like that. People blame victims, leaders, law makers, police, or tear shreds of the perpetrators of crime. I'm not sure how any of those responses help a great deal. And I think Jesus looks at our assumptions and our logic and says 'no'.

It's inadequate, it's not helpful, and sometimes it's downright cruel. No, I tell you he says, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did. Jesus says these people are no better than you; they're no worse than you but their experience should remind us of the brokenness around us which is also the brokenness within us.

Their experience should remind us we don't have all the answers. We don't understand why things happen like they do and sometimes when we try to, we can make matters worse. Jesus says it should also remind us to repent--to leave our old ways old logic, old excuses and old patterns of life and come back to God. He will have mercy on them Isaiah says He will freely pardon.

That brings us to God's response, to our repentance as we come to him in need, and as we come to him with unanswered questions.

As we come to him in faith, as we come to him in baptism, as we come to him in worship, as we come to him in prayer, as we take up his invitation to come in many and various ways His response is always the same. I'm so glad, you've come!

We are told in the parable of the lost sheep that there is more joy in heaven over one person who turns to God than ninety-nine who don't need too or don't think they need to. The gospel teaches us that only in Christ is there a new creation, only in Christ can things be restored, only in Christ can we be made what we were meant to be and begin to play our part in helping the world.

God responds in mercy which is also how we can and should respond to tragic situations in our world too, not with logic not with assumptions, not with explanations not with opinions but with help, aid, support, with mercy. Our God is merciful and he has more mercy to give than our hands can hold. Why?

Because the logic of this world doesn't hold. The priorities of this world don't deliver, and the ways of this world lead to nothing but the greatest miscarriage of justice to ever occur. The greatest tower of Siloam to ever come crashing down was the one that came down on Christ for you. He was innocent, he deserved nothing but the best, and yet he took the worst on our behalf.

That's redemption, that's mercy and that's what God has done for us, for
"As the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are my ways
Higher than your ways
And my thoughts than your thoughts"

Amen.