

Sunday, July 16, 2023

## Scripture Reading: Isaiah 55

*Where the will of God leads you, the grace of God will keep you. —Anon.*

Today's reading from Isaiah features an invitation. In verses 1-3, the prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, utters a dozen imperative verbs, a full one-third of which are the command to "come." "Come to the waters; come, buy and eat; come, buy; come to me," he cries. And then in verse 6, he adds, "Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; ... return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on [you] and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (vv. 6-7).

Sounds like an invitation. And if it sounded familiar to the ears of Isaiah's readers, that's only because it was. In those days, a recently crowned king would celebrate his ascension to the throne by announcing that his royal subjects were released from all debts. They were given a fresh start. This was only the beginning. To celebrate the king's new rule, he often called for a banquet. In towns, villages and hamlets, food was copious, and wine flowed freely. It was all designed to signal the dawning of a new day under the beneficent reign of a new king.

Enter Isaiah, acting as a herald for the new king: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters!" (v. 1).

What an invitation! "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (v. 1). What a deal! There's more of course, and usually when God is involved, there's always more.

So how will we respond to this invitation?

*Regretfully declines?* You have "other engagements." You're really a little too busy right now to get serious about faith and the practice of faith. Everyone wants a piece of you, and there's not enough "you" to go around. This sounds like the invitation of a lifetime, but it comes at a really bad time. "I'll have to take a raincheck. Sorry."

*Not sure?* We say to God, "Let me think about it for a while." Or, we say: "Maybe ... Whether or not I accept your gracious invitation sort of depends on circumstances. I am in the middle of things right now, but I might get clarity soon, and when I do, I will be able to say whether I am all in, or all out. I'm just not sure."

God bless you if you are able to say, "*Joyfully accepts!*" This invitation of amazing grace is far-ranging — casting a big, divine net of mercy and forgiveness. We are all sinners, we are all thirsty, we are all in need of divine food, and God is ready and willing to satisfy our need.

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Thank you, O God, for inviting me to the party! It sounds wonderful! I can't wait to feast on all that you have prepared for me. Amen.*

*Blessings,  
Lisa & Pastor Ben Motz*

**Daily Bible Readings**

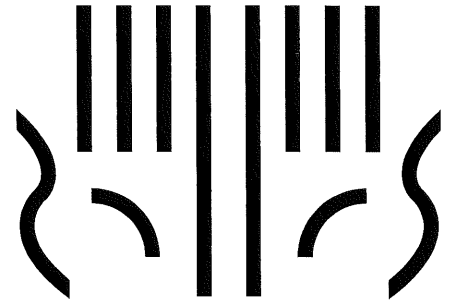
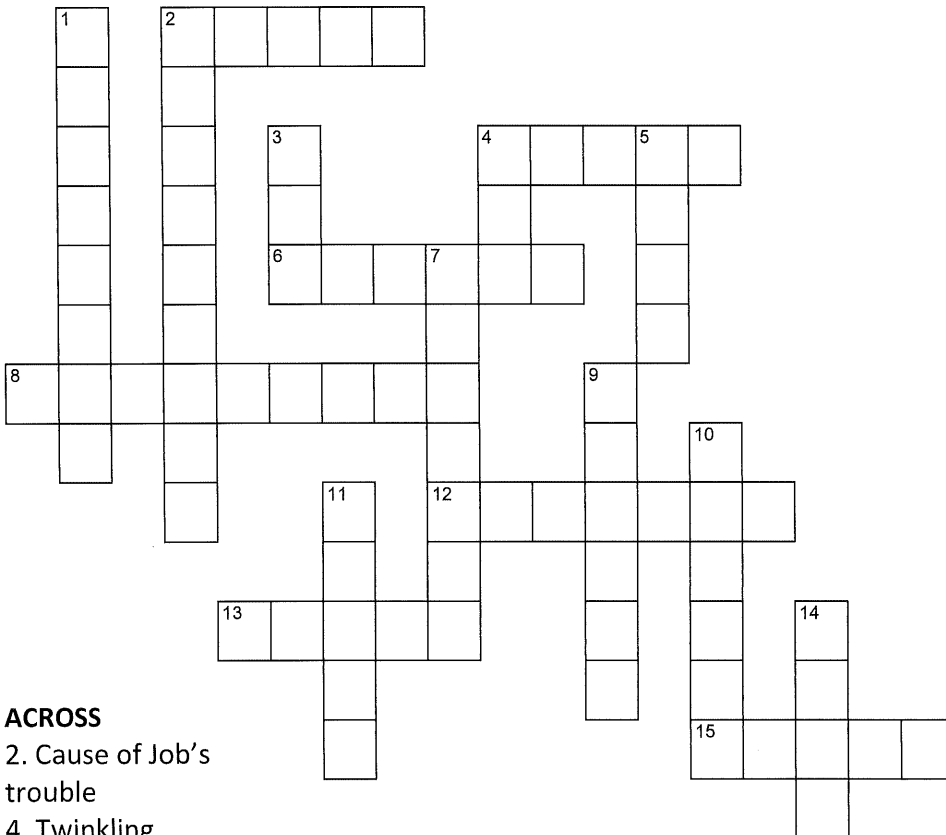
- Sunday: Acts 10-12
- Monday: Micah 5-7
- Tuesday: Nahum 1-3
- Wednesday: 2 Kings 20-21
- Thursday: Zephaniah 1-3
- Friday: Habakkuk 1-3
- Saturday: Psalms 79-81

**VERSE TO REMEMBER**

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

—Micah 6:8

**CROSSWORD:** All of the clues and answers are taken from the story of Job, the book in the Bible that comes right before Psalms.



Nevertheless, the righteous  
will hold to their ways, and  
those with clean hands will  
grow stronger.

J o b 1 7 : 9

**ACROSS**

- 2. Cause of Job's trouble
- 4. Twinkling, heavenly lights
- 6. The Shuhite, a friend (2:11)
- 8. Creature of the deep (41:1)
- 12. The Temanite, a friend (2:11)
- 13. Sores
- 15. Job had 7,000

**DOWN**

- 1. The One who ever lives (19:25)
- 2. Affliction
- 3. Had seven sons
- 4. Ocean
- 5. Precipitation
- 7. Job had 500
- 9. The Naamathite, a friend (2:11)
- 10. Job had 3,000
- 11. Job's 4th friend (32:2)
- 14. Job had 500 yoke

**Solution:**

- Across**
- 2. Satan
  - 4. stars
  - 6. Bildad
  - 8. Leviathan
  - 12. Eliphaz
  - 13. boils
  - 15. sheep

**Solution:**

- Down**
- 1. Redeemer
  - 2. suffering
  - 3. Job
  - 4. sea
  - 5. rain
  - 7. donkeys
  - 9. Zophar
  - 10. camels
  - 11. Elihu
  - 14. oxen