

Isaiah 55 (tx: 6,7)

## OUR GREATEST QUEST

- I. The godly object
- II. The necessary manner

## INTRODUCTION

The **LOS ANGELES TIMES** tells this story of **Brian Styler**.

- as he was surfing 1 warm, summer day in 1973, he was stung by poisonous stingray through his left kneecap & out the back of his leg.
- “For 10 days, Styler, then eighteen, lay partially paralyzed, wondering if he would ever walk again. He did, after the doctors removed a portion of the barb, declared him fit, & released him from hospital.
- “But a sliver of [the barb] escaped detection by X-rays & remained lodged in Styler's knee for more than a year, causing a fierce inflection that gradually invaded the surfer's entire leg, eroding the muscle & bone surrounding the knee joint. He nearly lost the limb.
- “12 years & 14 operations later, Styler [was] back on his board. [And then], after countless hours of practice he realized his lifelong dream & qualified for a professional surfing contest. His goal: To catch the eye of a sponsor & become the 1<sup>st</sup> disabled competitor on the pro surfing circuit.”

Now, of course, that was no small matter because the condition of **Styler's** knee & the pain restricted maneuvers & time in the water.

- besides, the drugs he took weaken the immune system so that any inflection could mean loss of the leg.
  - then too the pain he endured was aggravated by any movement he made.
- & yet with all that Styler didn't give up, so that he attended a workshop “on living with pain & successfully weaned himself from his drugs. [H used] a wide array of measures to minimize the pain.”
- all to realize the goal he was seeking in life to make it worthwhile.

Well, what are you seeking for; what is your desire & determination & delight to do in life?

- or to put it as someone says, “What is your quest? [For] without a quest, life is quickly reduced to a bleak black & wimpy white, a diet too bland to get anybody out of bed in the morning. A quest fuels our fire. It refuses to let us drift downstream gathering debris. It keeps our mind in gear, makes us press on.”
- th'fore, we all need to be on a quest for someone or something to make life meaningful.

But, you see, to find genuine, everlasting happiness & peace, satisfaction & success & security, we must never try to seek in the wrong ways the world gives us.

- it will never be found by seeking them just through higher education or a good paying job.

- or by owning a lot of clothes & cars, a big home or a large bank account.
- nor by a chemical dependency, or substance abuse, or by a 1 night sexual affair.
- that's because all these possessions & pleasures don't last.
  - &, if these temporal things of life are only the gods we love & live for, then at death we are going to be left without anything, not even God, for eternity.

And so there's a lot more to life & living to be able to experience true, eternal joy & well-being.

- & that is, that, above & beyond & besides all the other good quests in life, we must engage in the greatest quest of all.
- we must do what Isa.55:6 & 7 commands: "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon." (OVER)

Today then, we want to look at that **passage** & what is to be **OUR GREATEST QUEST** in life.

- **1<sup>st</sup>**, the godly object of that search.
- **&, 2<sup>nd</sup>**, the necessary manner in which we must carry out our quest.

## I. THE GODLY MANNER

Now **Isa.55** is pure gospel--God's good news of salvation & life for lost sinners.

- but, so that we will pay attention to His good news of helping & healing to experience joyful living, it 1<sup>st</sup> tells us the bad news about us human beings.
- & in vs.1&2 it paints a pretty pathetic picture of our terrible condition.

In those **verses** it tells us that in & of ourselves we are all thirsty & penniless.

- a situation we ourselves can in no way remedy.
- you see, basically we all have a driving desire & determination to fill the void & vacuum in our hearts & souls & lives with something to be happy.

But we are trying to fill our emptiness by spending, **Isaiah** says, with money & labor, with all we are & have on that which isn't the bread that can really satisfy us.

- that is, we are trying to find true, unending, ever-enduring peace by gaining a lot of material goods & experiences.
- & the more we want them, the more we seek & strive for them.
  - & the more we get, the more we aren't satisfied, because we always want more & more.
- you see, a man's material appetite is infinite so that it can never be filled.
  - that's because enough is always a little more than already we have.

That then is the person without God or Jesus Christ in their lives.

- they spend everything on the passing, perishing things of this life.

- things that can never bring genuine satisfaction & serenity in the present, nor in the life to come.
- th'fore sinful human beings have absolutely nothing--no real joy & meaningful life
  - & they are forever thirsty & penniless, even if they gain the whole world.

So Lord in grace calls us with His good news:

- “Say there! You who thirst & have nothing. Come to me & drink, even if you have no money. Come & buy real satisfaction & security, real peace & happiness forever--it’s all free! Why do you spend money on bread that does not satisfy & give you strength? Why do you work for that which does not do you any good? Listen & I'll tell you where to get food that will really satisfy you forever. Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, for the life of your soul is at stake.”
- in other words, to find real relief for spiritual hunger & thirst so that we experience true, total, satisfying, eternal living we must, as our text says, “Seek Lord while He is near or is available.”

Th'fore, when the passage says we must seek Lord now, while He is near & can be found, that means He isn't lost or dead & gone.

- God isn't hiding far away out there somewhere with little or no concern for us.
- no, for Bible clearly & certainly states that Lord is everywhere around & even in us.
  - Jer.23 says He is so big & glorious that He fills the whole universe.
  - Deut.4 says Lord is in heaven above, & right here on earth below.
  - & ICor.6 says our bodies are places where God lives.

We see then God hasn't forsaken His creation, for He shows He is near by the fact He has created & now cares for it all.

- Acts 17 says He made the entire universe & everything in it so He isn't far from anyone of us.
  - not only that, vs.28 says He is so close that we live & move & have our being in Him.
- & He is so near that we can seek & find Him so we must return to Him now because the day of judgment is coming when it will be too late to seek Him for salvation.
- also Ps.19 & Rom.1 tell us that all of creation reveals Him & His glory & power.
- & so we see that God isn't hidden, so that if we open our eyes of faith we will see Him everywhere in creation & the world.

But we can also be sure God is near to be found, because He has revealed Himself & come to us as **Jesus Christ of Nazareth**--God in human flesh & form.

- th'fore Bible teaches God has come so very close to us that He actually became 1 of us to be intricately involved in our lives.
  - to walk & talk with us, to die & suffer hell for our sin, to be buried & arise again to be our gracious, loving Savior so that sin's blindness can be taken away.
  - & we can find & see Him & experience eternal life with Him.

- & so God is near before us at Calvary as the crucified Christ, & at the empty grave as our risen Savior.
- & He is near to us on the pages of His Word, Scriptures, where we meet Jesus so that there we also find & meet God face to face when we seek Him.

Th'fore God is not lost or hiding from us.

- as a matter of fact, Bible says it is really He who seeks us 1<sup>st</sup> by His saving grace, even before we ever seek Him.
- or before we ever can or want to.

You see, that's the whole emphasis of **Bible**: that God is sovereign & has acted 1<sup>st</sup>.

- for Gen.3 says when the 1<sup>st</sup> human beings fell into sin, they tried to hide from Lord.
- but it was God who came calling: “Man or Woman, where are you?”
  - He 1<sup>st</sup> came seeking them with salvation or else there would be no salvation for us sinners.

Well that means then **Bible** isn't about a God who is lost, but about us lost human beings.

- about the God who 1<sup>st</sup> seeks us to find & save us.
- about the God of infinite wisdom & power & love who way back in eternity already decided & decreed He would save sinners.
  - about the God who then promised & prepared for our salvation down through OT.
  - about the God who then, when all was ready, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world--
    - to a cradle & a cross & to the grave by which He seeks & saves lost, sinful human beings.
- & Bible is about the God who sends His Church & Christians into the world to proclaim the good news of His ever-seeking, saving love & grace found in Jesus.

If God hadn't done that or isn't doing that, we would never seek & find Him & be saved.

- for once we were dead in sin & slaves to Satan, so that we can't of our own accord or ability, or in our own strength or by our own wills seek Lord to live again.
- no one can, until He 1<sup>st</sup> seeks to save us by His powerful grace through H Spirit who moves us to believe in Jesus & strengthens us to live obediently for Him.

And so **Bible** says God is near--in the world & in His Word.

- He is here with His saving love, calling people to seek & find Him for real salvation & perfect peace.
  - & for genuine eternal living.
- & we will find Him if seek Him only in the right way. (OVER)

II. THE NECESSARY MANNER

And that is the 2<sup>nd</sup> truth of our text where we are told what is **THE NECESSARY MANNER** in which we must seek Lord.

- now the basic idea of seeking in our text is “to tread”.
- th'fore it means stepping towards God, or simply coming to Him.
  - & to call upon Him also means to go to Him.
- & what we must do, when we come Lord so that we will find Him, is then laid out for us in vs.7: “Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.”

Well that means, even as tenses of the **Hebrew** verbs in our **passage** show, that we can't find Lord by ourselves or with our own efforts & endeavors, with our own savvy & strength.

- the whole emphasis of Isa.55 is that salvation is a free gift of grace from God.
- that being His to live forever is ours without price or money-without our own wisdom & works.

And so we won't find real, eternal salvation & joy & life by just seeking God with a lot of religious rites & rituals & routines 2 times a week on **Sunday** in church--

- while the rest of the time, during the week at work & play, we love & live for other gods.
- nor will we find Lord if we seek to be redeemed & received by Him just through a lot of pious talk & activities, like Bible reading & study, or by praises & prayers from our lips.
  - nor by just thoroughly knowing the doctrines of Scripture in our head, & not in our hearts.
    - & they aren't lived out in our daily lives.
- nor will we find Lord by just being sorry for ourselves because of what sin does to us so that is no real change in lives.

These are not the ways to seek & find God, for **Isa.55** says it must be done with sincere repentance & faith & obedience that involve our total being & behavior.

- you see, because we are sinners, we are lost & separated from Lord by the insurmountable barrier of sin.
- & as long as that great wall is there, no one can find God for salvation.
  - & He & we human beings can't ever meet & live together.

But **Bible's** good news is that the barrier of sin has been completely removed.

- God Himself has removed it, as Jesus Christ, with Calvary's cross where He paid the full price of sin once & for all, & got us salvation...
  - & through His death & resurrection He has opened the way back to Himself where there is true life now & forever.
- th'fore to find Him & be received by Him, we must go & seek Him at Calvary, the only place where God is & where He & we sinful human beings can meet again.
  - the only place of pardon from guilt & to possess peace with Lord.

However, Isa.55 also teaches, to seek & find God at Calvary, we must 1<sup>st</sup> forsake our old sinful ways & thoughts.

- & that means we must have real repentance.
- that is to say, we've got to realize who we are before Lord: sinners who disobey Him & His will.
  - we must sincerely believe that it was our sins that put Him on the cross.
  - & we must then be sincerely sorry for what our sins have done & do to God.

But that's not all, for genuine repentance also means to put off the old person of sin so that we have a real desire & drive to turn away & keep from all that is sinful.

- you see, it's not enough to just say we are sorry.
- but we must be & behave we are sorry.

And so Isa.55 continues that, to seek & find Lord, we must also "turn to" Him.

- turn away completely from any evil way of living & go to God & live in His will & way only.
- & that's true faith.

True faith is to wholeheartedly accept Lord & all He has done for salvation.

- it is to believe, with our entire being & lives, that we are saved only because of what God has so graciously & gloriously accomplished through Jesus & His death & resurrection.
- faith is to totally trust God that we are forgiven of all sins & accepted by Him into His family to live forever only due to the fact of Calvary's cross & Easter's empty grave.

And then genuine repentance & faith always result in a converted life.

- together they involve that we turn from sin to God so that we become a new Christ-like person.
  - that there is an authentic change in our lifestyles that are distinct from those outside of Christ.
- & we no longer live for ourselves, but we love & live for Him only.

Th'fore seeking Lord in obedient faith & repentance is not just a 1 time act.

- it involves that we constantly seek Him & daily strive to stay close to Him in His will & ways.
- & to do that we must be diligently & faithfully in His Word, Bible, & in prayer to Him.
  - we must be regular in our attendance at worship.
  - we must stay away for those places & people that can lead us away from Him & into wickedness & wrong.
- & we must constantly fill our minds & lives with those godly things that are true & pure & lovely & moral & just & honest & uplifting, etc.

And then, when we seek Lord in that way, our text says, His wonderful, sure promise is that we will find Him & discover His abundant mercy & free, over-flowing forgiveness.

- we will be rescued from sin & death, restored to being His friend.
- no, even more glorious yet: we will be in His family, & possess & experience eternal life with Him.
  - we will have strength for this present life through the presence & power of H Spirit.
  - we will have a bright hope for the future & the eternity of the new world freed from all evil & sufferings forever.
- all that means we will possess life that is worth living even now with eternal satisfaction & security & joy.

But what a tragedy if we haven't yet found Lord & real salvation & life, hope & happiness because we are searching in the wrong way & at the wrong place!

- that only means eternal death without Him.
- that's why Bible continually calls & commands us to seek Lord now, while He is still near & can be found.

You see, there is no time to delay, because there may never be a tomorrow for you or me.

- death may end our earthly existence today, & after death there is no 2<sup>nd</sup> chance.
- & if you haven't sought in repentance & faith & obedience & found Lord in this life, then you will search for Him forever in hell, but you will never find Him.

So Jesus says in **John 12** we must walk while there is yet light--

- that is to say, walk in the light of God's Word so we can find the right way. (OVER)
- for the darkness is coming when we will not know where to go & it will be too late for all eternity.

## CONCLUSION

You know, **Bible** tells us of a person who wanted to have a good time in sin before he came to Christ, but he never did so that he was lost for eternity.

- we know of another person from the pages of Scripture who wanted to put off following Lord so he could try out a new team of oxen, or to be successful 1<sup>st</sup>--
- but then it was too late, & he lost everything, even his soul eternally.

The **Bible** also tells us of a **Roman Emperor** who heard the call to seek God in repentance & faith.

- but he told Paul to go away & at a more convenient time he would accept Christ.
- but then was too late, for there never was a more convenient time than the presence so that he lost eternally.

Oh, we may never put off seeking Lord now while He is close & ready to freely pardon & give us peace forever.

- do it now before it is too late.

AMEN