

## Sermon for March 24, 2019 “Dinner’s Ready!”

### Isaiah 55:1-9

“Time for Dinner!” I remember when I was growing up, all us kids would get together in the afternoons to play. We would play a game of baseball or football or release the peddlers. When dinner time came around one mother would lean out her front door and holler for her kids to come to dinner. And we all knew that soon our mothers would be calling us too. And one by one we would scatter to our houses to eat.

In Isaiah God is saying: “Dinner’s ready.” God says, “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1) Of course God is not talking about physical food that feeds only the body and then leaves one hungry again. God is offering spiritual food. God is offering to fill the empty hearts and souls of the people. And this spiritual food is free!

But people often feed spiritually on things that do not fill or sustain. Their spiritual intake consists of empty calories. Have you ever been hungry and found yourself eating a box full of cookies instead of something good for you? Of course, I’m not talking about Girl Scout cookies. However, you should save those for desert. When you realize what you have done you say, “I could have had a V-8.” Well the people were spending their lives on spiritual junk food. And God is saying “You could have had a God Almighty.” Or as Isaiah put it, “Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness.” (Isaiah 55:2)

God is calling the people to a dinner of good food, but there is a flaw in this little analogy of God calling the children to dinner. When I was little each mother would call her own children to dinner. She would say “Scott, dinner’s ready,” or “Susan, come to dinner.” God is making a general call.

Just in case we missed it, Isaiah spells it out for us. He writes, “Behold, you shall call nations that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.” (Isaiah 55:5) God was calling not just the Israelites to the dinner table. God was calling the whole world to the table!

We Christians realize that this was God’s plan from the beginning. When God called Abraham, God said that he would be a blessing to the nations. This part of Isaiah was written after Israel had been scattered among the nations. As a result, by the time of Jesus there were Jews, people of God, in every city of the known world. God was preparing the table for his Son; Jesus.

This was something new and amazing. It didn’t fit with the way that they thought. God had chosen them to be the people of God. So, their thought that they were the only people of God.

But God’s people needed to update their thinking. You see God doesn’t think the way we think. God’s understanding is far above ours. You know how people used to think

the world was flat. And it is understandable; I mean look at the world around you. It has some hills and valleys. But for the most part it is level. I mean if it really is round and revolving why don't we all fall off into space? That is the way people thought and then the understanding that earth as a ball floating in space came along and people had to rethink things.

God's understanding of the way things are is so far above ours that sometimes we need to rethink things. God's ways are so far above ours that at times they don't make sense to us. That God would use the unrighteousness of his people, the destruction of Israel and of the Holy Temple to spread righteousness, just makes no sense to us. And that God would use the cruel death of his own Son to save us all from our sins doesn't make sense to our human logic either. But God's ways are far above our ways!

God is calling "Dinner's ready!" The Almighty is calling us all to the table. A table that is prepared for all who would come. A table full of good things. God has been working hard to prepare for us spiritual foods that will fill the empty places in our hearts and souls. The table is spread and the whole neighborhood is called to feast.

But there is one thing. I don't know about you, but my mother always told me to wash my hands before I came to the table. I had been out playing in the dirt and such and my hands were usually filthy. Isaiah put it this way: "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55:7)

Maybe a better analogy is that my mother would not let me eat snacks right before the meal. God is saying if you are coming to the table you have to forsake your spiritual junk food ways. You can't bring your junk food to the table; you have to put it down. In the same way we are called to repent of our sin; to turn from it so that we can truly feast on the spiritual food God provides.

God calls all who are hungry. God is calling the whole neighborhood. Any who are hungry are called to dinner. Too often Christians think that God's call to dinner is just for church folk. I heard a church member say once that we should invite new residents to church because some of them might be Methodists. Sure, they might be and some of them might not be Christian so we should invite them. Some may need to know that they have a Heavenly Father who loves them. They may believe but not be a part of a church family. They may need to experience the love of God in a community of faith.

We live in a world where all God's children get hungry. They thirst for clean water and hunger for spiritual food that sustains. Unfortunately, many are feasting on the junk food that world offers.

You know when I was a child sometimes a mother would call her children to dinner and they would not hear her. Inevitably another child in the neighborhood would hear the call and come running, "Johnny, your mama's calling you to dinner." God is calling the whole neighborhood to dinner and it's good food so no one would want to miss it! But some of the children have not heard the call. We have heard the call. Maybe we need to run and tell the other children that their Heavenly Father is calling them to dinner!