

## Personal Retreat Day: **Drawing Near the Throne of Grace**

*Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 4:14-16

### **Acknowledging the Noise**

As you begin to settle your soul before the Lord this morning, take some time to acknowledge what clamors for your attention. Write out what weighs most heavy, what tasks are most present in your thinking, what worries or fears gnaw at your peace and hope.

As your soul begins to unburden, are there longings that are surfacing? Places you're becoming aware of that need the loving touch of your Savior? Desires for God that are emerging? Weariness and depletion that needs restoration?

Write or speak these things out in a prayer to the Lord. Answer His question, "Child, what would you have me do for you?"

### **Approaching the Throne of Grace**

Responding to The Lord's invitation to draw near His Throne of Grace is an invitation to open ourselves up to receive the Grace he knows we most need. It's an act of faith to quiet the competing voices in our heads, and attend to HIS voice. This can take some work sometimes. Attention is short. Ears are unpracticed in recognizing His words of life. Ask for the Spirit's help. Invite His work in your life right now to help you find *grace to help in our time of need*.

Think over the teaching on loving God and the Law over the past few weeks. What has stood out to you?

- What has been encouraging to you? What change is it producing, or what difference it that making? Has your thinking and attitudes been grown in anyway?
- What has been a struggle to grasp? Do you find yourself bumping up against any resistance in your own heart? If so, spend some time unpacking that.
- Is the Lord putting His finger on a place of pain, doubt, fear or disobedience in your own life? If so, acknowledge this and invite his continued work in your life to bring lease and growth in this area.

Now read through Isaiah 55.

## Receiving from the Throne of Grace

Work your way through each section slowly. Be attentive to what the Lord has to say to you. Let your soul respond in repentance, affirmation and worship as is fitting. Be fully present and bear before your God. Remember the covering He's already purchased for you. And receive the gift of Himself he now offers, afresh and a new.

Isaiah 55

- 1        Come, 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.
- 2        Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
              and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

- Notice the condition of the one who's bidden to "come". How does this description fit you? In what ways are you thirsty and out of resources ("he who has no money")? Are there ways you resist seeing yourself this way, but the Lord is inviting you to do so? What's the goodness of admitting that we're in this condition?
- The images of God's provision here are water, wine, milk and bread. Ponder these. What does each one uniquely provide? Under what circumstances are they each what are most needed?
- What's the promise imbedded in the invitation and rebuke of these verses?

- Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,  
              and delight yourselves in rich food.
- 3        Incline your ear, and come to me;  
              hear, that your soul may live;

- What's the means by which we access this *soul food*?
- What is the result when we do?

- and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
              my steadfast, sure love for David.
- 4        Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
              a leader and commander for the peoples.
- 5        Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,  
              and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,  
              because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,  
              for he has glorified you.

- These verses speak of the long-standing promises and purposes of God. How does being connected to God's love and commitment to people who lived so long ago (Abraham, Moses, David, the Israelites . . .) give perspective on your own life and God's work in it?
- In the press of life, it can be hard to believe that the glory of God is seen in us, let alone something that attracts others ("a nation") to God. DOES the glory of God matter? If so, how/why? What makes this a struggle to hold to? What difference would it make if we did?

Is. 55:6           “Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
                     call upon him while he is near;  
 7           let the wicked forsake his way,  
                     and the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
                     let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him,  
 8           For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
                     neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
 9           For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
                     so are my ways higher than your ways  
                     and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
                     and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

- Consider how you are not like God and God is not like you. Spend some time in quiet confession of the sin you are aware of. How do you fail to love God? In what ways are you failing to love your neighbor?
- Sit quietly and invite the Lord’s loving gaze in your life to reveal to you sin you’ve not yet seen, or been willing to acknowledge with Him.
- Reflect on God’s other-ness. Most poignant is his eagerness to forgive us and his willingness to do the heavy lifting to free us from our sin. This, in turn, allows us to become more like him. Receive that forgiveness now. Cast your gaze on The One who loves you. See yourself as He sees you – with His work completed in you, clothed in the Righteousness of Christ. What do you want to say to Him in response?

Is. 55:10           “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven  
                     and do not return there but water the earth,  
                     making it bring forth and sprout,  
                     giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
 11          so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
                     it shall not return to me empty,  
                     but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
                     and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Is. 55:12           “For you shall go out in joy  
                     and be led forth in peace;  
                     the mountains and the hills before you  
                     shall break forth into singing,  
                     and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.  
 13          Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;  
                     instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;  
                     and it shall make a name for the LORD  
                     an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

- This is a picture of completion, of purposes being fulfilled. What are the purposes? How sure are they to be completed? What encouragement does that bring you, where you are today?

### **Living in front of the Throne of Grace**

What would you like to take with you from your time alone with the Lord today? How can others be praying for you about that?