

Title: Because, you just can't stand there!
Text: Isaiah 54-55
Theme: The Divine invitation for all to experience grace
Series: Isaiah #48
Prop Stmtnt: Christ procured a salvation that is so certain that we can sing about it and compel others to come to it boldly!

A music professor at my college had some mannerisms that made him an easy target for ridicule. But, in God's providence I had a conversation with him one day about the fact that when I preached I usually damaged my vocal cords. He offered to help. Here was a man, who from a distance seemed a bit odd, but up close was compassionate, knowledgeable and, in my case, very, very helpful. Every Friday morning for about 2-3 months he would coach me on how to use my voice. He received no extra pay or accolades for it. He just served the Lord and served you by faith. My initial assessment of him completely changed. It is easy to criticize someone from a distance. It takes no special talent to make fun of another. However, if you know the person, and he has cared for you and did not have to, then you are not quick to criticize at all.

When life is raw and your vulnerabilities, inadequacies, poor decisions, unfulfilled hopes, weaknesses and failures are exposed, it is so easy to blame God. After all, he is Sovereign. From a distance we give God's job performance abysmal rating and lob our boos and level our criticisms at a God who neglects us, doesn't come through for us, and gives us the right to resentment and bitterness. But, if we get close to him and see him for who he is and experience his all-wise counsel and competent care, then our boos become praise. Arms folded become hands raised. It is not him who changes. We finally see.

Contrary to those who say that the God of the OT is just a God of anger and wrath, we have seen that this God is a God of unbelievable grace. In wrath, he remembers mercy. He puts his glory on display by saving people through judgment. He reserved the greatest judgment for his Son, who died in our place so that we could be recipients of his mercy. We read the 4th Servant's Song (52.13-53.12) and would be completely ashamed at our accusations, if we weren't so overwhelmed at his grace. This is the true God of the Bible.

This morning, we are going to look at two chapters that immediately follow that amazing prophecy of the death and resurrection of Christ. My sermons are simply my attempt at applying good methods of Bible study. I want you to know how the original audience understood this text. In other words, "what did it mean then?" Then I want you to know what it means now. It cannot mean something now that it did not mean then. Then I want you to think how this is to be applied in your life. Now, we are a congregation. We are a family of believers. The Bible portrays the spiritual growth of believers as being heavily influenced by the congregation. Therefore, I rely upon you to carry out your God-given responsibility to help each other apply the truths of these sermons to one another. That is

what we seek to accomplish by means of our Small Group Ministry. In these gatherings, members of the church encourage one another to live out the truths of the Scriptures. Paul Tripp recently said, *“You clearly weren’t designed by God to live independently, so in any area of your life why would you ever try?”* It is not enough for me to preach in a manner that is consistent with the Scriptures. You need to hear and apply the Word. You need to respond to the Word and you need one another to help you with that. Here in Isaiah, we have just studied the amazing promise of the Suffering Servant, promised by God who will bear our sin upon himself. Now, two chapters command us to respond. Each chapter begins with a single command; sing and come. You have to respond to Christ.

1. **Sing!** – (54)

When our God and King commands us to sing, it is the right command based on the gracious acts of our King. This is what one of the things that I love so much about this. God is not willing to settle for your external obedience. We are not like butlers and servants who are expected to be respectful when on duty, but who only do our job because we are paid. No. We are his children. We are his very own. We are loved and bought by him and he longs for, rightfully longs for, calls for our delight to be in Him. So, God is right to command us to sing. And the assumption is that we will sing from the very depths of our being. This is not a singing, because it is that time in the order of service to sing and we are just going through the motions. No, this command for us to sing is the right and joyful response because the barren, childless, despised and rejected wife is going to be restored back to the strong and tender arms of her loving husband who guarantees her that nothing will stop him from loving her forever and that she will have a family that is so large that it will fill the earth. She, who knew shame and rejection, now has laughter, joy, abundance, relationship, security, acceptance, honor and a home forever and ever. This is our God! This is what he has done – now sing your heart out!

A. **Sing for joy over the restoration of your family** (1-10)

These 10 verses would have enormous meaning to the people of Judah. Isaiah is telling them that in spite of the fact that they are going to be taken into captivity into Babylon because of their rebellion against God, in spite of the fact that their land, their families, their way of life, their holidays and traditions are going to be on the verge of annihilation, that God will not forget them. God is not done with them, although they treated God as if they were done with him. He will yet restore them. The language of these 10 verses utilizes imagery that would resonate in their hearts. Because of what the Suffering Servant accomplishes (53), the rejected people of God will be restored to something so much greater than they ever imagined. The analogy used here, is one that some of you feel deeply. You know what it is like to not be able to bear a child. You know the feeling of inadequacy that threatens you, and the sense of failure, even judgment that you have to fight against. How, unspeakably cruel then would it be to ask a woman who cannot bear children to sing like she did, unless you are able to give her what her heart aches for. But, this is what God is doing. He is pointing us to what His Son accomplishes on the cross

(53) and saying, sing; by faith, sing! Sing because you are going to have children like you have never imagined and not only that, you need to make your tent bigger (v.2) because you do not have enough room for them. This is not just a promise to Judah that she is going to be delivered back from her captivity (what it meant then), but in light of the promise of 53, this is a promise to us, (what it means now) that we are going to experience life in an eternal family, made up of the people of God, where we experience the joy of intimate security, where there is no shame (4), where our Creator is our husband (5) and the Holy One, who instead of invoking terror, we find is our Redeemer.

I know that this may surprise some of you, but there are some husbands and wives who get into some serious disagreements and are even known to, on occasion, argue with each other. Much argument is fueled with high-octane accelerants because someone digs out a big matzo ball from the past and slams the other person in the face with it. Even when acknowledging past tension, there is this perceived need to justify ourselves or remind others what provoked us. So, the conversation often goes like something like this: "Wow, you were really upset back there, weren't you?" "Well, yea, but do you remember what you said that made me so upset?" Now, in that exchange, more than likely both parties were at fault. But notice the first part of v. 7 and the first part of v. 8. God says, "*For a brief moment I deserted you*" and "*In overflowing anger for a moment I hid my face from you.*" Here is God saying that he had been angry with them, but he is over that now. Now, hold the phone! What made God so angry? Did he just happen to be in a foul mood? No! God was grieved at the rejection and the rebellion of his own people. It was their fault that God was angry. But, notice that he does not mention that! WOW, that is what you call forgiveness. God does not even mention their sin, even when referencing his past anger. And, again the analogy that God uses, is so personal and therefore so powerful. Guys, what do you think of when you hear the phrase, "*the woman I married*"? Most of you, I would imagine remember what your wife was like when you got married. Life was an adventure and your marriage was like a dance. She laughed, her eyes flashed, your heart melted. You could not wait to be home after work. But now, if you have disengaged from the relationship and live more like in an arrangement than a marriage, you may now watch your wife just go through the motions and do what is expected of her. The fire is gone. The flash of her eyes is now replaced with a cold and listless stare. Life has been a major disappointment. Like a wife deserted physically, maybe emotionally (6), like a young wife who is rejected (6), are the people of God, only in their case it was their sin, not the sin of their husband. And here they are, like Hosea's wife who returned to her life in the streets, now completely abandoned, selling herself in the slave market to cover her debts only to find her husband out-bidding everyone else because he is the only one who loves her. He will not stand by and let her destroy herself and simply shrug his shoulders. He loves her! That's our God! We are the childless, foreign, outcast widow, humiliated and vulnerable, now loved, and married to the King! Isaiah is not just writing about Judah being restored back to her land after the captivity, he is writing about being restored to God. In verses 9-10, God is saying, that just like he went on record with Noah and made

a promise, he is going on record with his own people saying, I will not be angry with you any more. Even if the mountains depart, my steadfast love will not depart from you. Sing!

B. **Sing with boldness over your inheritance in the city of God** (11-17)

In verses 11-17, God is commanding us to sing (by faith) because of the joy of a permanent home that he is preparing for his bride, his people. Again, this is the result of what the Servant does (53). We are restored to God through Christ, and this is what enables us to be with him! He describes that we will not only be like his bride, but we will be citizens with him in his city. These verses anticipate Revelation 21-22. This is the inheritance, the future for the people of God, guaranteed by God himself, who, in verses 16-17, makes a stunning claim regarding his Sovereignty over all things as the reason why you can sing with boldness. Here is why this inheritance is secure. Here is why you will live with security and hilarious joy and overwhelming love and freedom. God says, nothing happens apart from my oversight. Notice what God says in v. 16. I am sovereign over human skill (*I have created the smith – blacksmith*). I am sovereign over the process of production (*who blows the fire of coals and produces a weapon*). I am sovereign over the purpose that the blacksmith has for the design of the weapon (*for its purpose*), and I am sovereign over the outcome (*I have also created the ravager to destroy*). Nothing happens apart from the sovereignty of God. That truth is for our comfort, for our trust and ultimately for our joy. But, God never presents his sovereignty as an excuse in anyway for human responsibility. God is in control, and we stand responsible to him for every decision that we make. How it all works together is a mystery. However, God could never make an eternal promise like this, if he were not in control of all things, including all contingencies. The sovereignty of God is not a truth to fear, it is a reason to rest. Do you see what this chapter tells us about God? Do you see what kind of a God he is? Some of you remember Timothy McVeigh who blew up the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. When he was scheduled to die, some of the family members of the victims petitioned the judge to witness his death. They wanted the satisfaction of seeing him die. Our sin is reason enough for God to want satisfaction to see us die. Instead, he was satisfied to see his Son die, for us. This is our God. The 2nd command is to come!

2. **Come!** – (55)

The opening word of chapter 55 translated “come” is a bit difficult to translate into our language. The word actually sounds like, “Ho!” It is the cry of someone desperately trying to get your attention so you can see what is yours for the asking. It is all here, for you to accept, but here is the condition. You must...

A. **Admit your need and admit His supply** (1-5)

For months we labored through the first major section of Isaiah. We heard of God’s warnings of judgment that awaited those who rebelled against him. I needed to preach

through those chapters and you needed hear those sermons, but they were not easy messages to neither listen to nor deliver. But, something has happened here. God is warm, welcoming, approving, gentle, loving and accepting. But, what has changed? The difference is all based on Christ (53).

a. Admit you are thirsty – 1a

This should be obvious to the nation of Judah, overrun by another people and living in poverty and need. It should be obvious to you and me, who live with the effects of sin that never satisfy. Oh, do not miss this important matter. Sin drains you. It empties you of strength, of hope, of resolve, of tenderness and of dreams. It leaves you dry, hard, calloused, and frustrated. Will you not admit it? Will you admit that you are worn out?

b. Admit you are bankrupt – 1b

Sometimes when I am trying to help someone by giving him good counsel from the Word, he rejects it, because he has not yet hit bottom. He does admit that he cannot fix this on his own. This is the most difficult thing for us to face, but this is the truth. I am spiritually, morally, personally bankrupt. I have no resources with which to purchase the righteousness that I need in order to stand before God. But that is the point! Only the person who has no spiritual currency can buy the wine, milk and bread. How can you buy something when you have no money? You buy it because someone else has already paid the price and he will only sell it to those who admit that they cannot save themselves.

c. Admit you have wasted your money – 2a

This not only speaks of the person who tries to do it his way, but it speaks of religions that tell you to try harder, be nicer, give away more money, volunteer more, pray this prayer, repeat these words, follow this ceremony, do this new (or old) ritual. It is easy to see how someone has utterly wasted their life on drugs or alcohol or gambling. You can see the scars in the arms, the ravages in the face, the despair in the eyes. But it is just as damning for a well-connected person, smartly dressed to give to charity in hopes that he will get some credit for this with God. Your money does not buy God's righteousness. I met a pastor one time who had a guy start coming to his church and every week he was dropping \$10,000 in the offering. I kid you not, the guy was seriously loaded, but his HS kid was a mess and the church had been reaching out to him and the kid was coming around. The dad was so happy, but the dad was living with a woman who was not his wife. The pastor met with this man and said you cannot do this. It is wrong. You need to seek reconciliation with your wife. Over time the guy kept dragging his feet on dealing with it, and finally the pastor said, "Listen, we are not going to accept any more of your money until you stop this." Do you get his point!? What you need you cannot buy. Everything that you can buy with your money is not going to satisfy you. That is why...

d. Acknowledge your real desires – 2b

Eat what is good! Get the good stuff. Get the stuff that money cannot buy – what is that? It is God! It is his grace. It is the righteousness of his Son for you. It is forgiveness. It is mercy. It is salvation. This is what your soul really craves. Nothing else satisfies.

e. Listen to God (instead of yourself) – 3-5

All that is described in these verses is the total surrender of one's life to God. This is seen in the last half of this chapter.

B. Admit your failure and surrender to his ways. (6-13)

f. Pursue God now! – 6

There is urgency to this and rightfully so. If you have this sense of conviction that you need give in to God's ways and stop fighting him, then I urge you, on the basis of this text to do so – now. Do not think that you will have tomorrow to turn to God. The sin that you are convicted of today may so harden your heart tomorrow that you no longer have any desire to seek the Lord. Today, he can be found. Tomorrow you may not care.

g. Repent and receive mercy now! – 7

Charles Spurgeon said, "*You and your sins must separate, or you and your God can never come together.*" What is it that you do not want to give up? What is it that you think that you have to have? Some of you are sitting here thinking that your sin is too serious; that you are beyond hope. Look at the end of v. 7. What does it say? Notice what comes next.

h. His ways are beyond you – 8-9

God does not forgive like many of us. He does not hold on to things and bring them out of history and review them.

i. His word cannot be stopped – 10-11

j. His plan will be accomplished – 12-13

What comfort we find in these words! God, infinite in glory, eternal in time, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable simply says the obvious. Since He is infinite and you are finite, you are not going to be able to understand all that He is nor all that He

does. You are creation, God is Creator. That is a gap you cannot bridge. You can never get up to his level. So, he came to your level in the person of Christ. We would never have thought of that because his ways are not our ways. Christ died for us that we might be forgiven. We would have never thought of that. But, God planned it, promised it, previewed it, and performed it. And just like rain and snow that falls and waters the earth, God never, ever makes a promise that he will not keep. His Word is so authoritative and binding, that it is in his saying, that the very thing that is spoken of is already secured.

Have you ever made a promise to someone that you could not keep because of something that happened to you beyond your control? This is particularly grievous when you are seeking to rebuild trust with someone. Already they are suspicious of you and are prone to doubt any excuse that you may offer. But, the truth is, there are things that happen to us that we cannot control. Do you realize that God never faces that problem? That is the point. When God makes a promise, he is in the position to control every single thing that happens in this universe. Otherwise his promises would be nothing more than the good intentions of a benevolent being. And while that may make you feel special, you would have no absolute assurance that anything that he promised would actually happen.

So, God tells us 150 years before the guy is born that a man named Cyrus is going to free the Jews to be able to return from Babylon to Judah. God says that to prove that everything that he says is worthy of our trust. 700 years before he is born, God tells us that a Savior is going to come who will bear our sin and die in our place – and he does. The fulfillment of Isaiah 53 in the life of Christ is astounding. But it does not stop there. This same God says, if you come to me, I will forgive you. If you trust me I will receive you as my own. If you admit your need of me and give up fighting and arguing against me, I will make you part of my family and part of the people with whom I will live forever and ever in the city of God. And instead of shame, brokenness, emptiness, addiction, bondage, bitterness, guilt and failure, “you shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing.” In fact the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” There is coming a day, when I am going to re-make this world just as I re-make people to be all that I originally designed them to be. Why would you not run to a God like that? After all that he has done, you just can’t stand there.