

Sermon Topic: “Repenting” by Preacher Wendy Chiang (Part of Sermon series – “With all your heart”)
Sermon Text: Isaiah 55:1-3;6-9 & 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

A. Introduction

- The word ‘Repent’ is defined in the following ways by the King James Dictionary –
 - To change mind & purpose
 - To express regret over thought and action
 - To turn around in a new direction
- Amidst these times, the Singapore Government has been communicating the message that safety and survival comes only to those who change their minds, attitudes and habits. New times call for new norms.
- In the same way, God’s message, given to each and every person, is that satisfaction and salvation comes to those who change their minds, their attitudes and their habits. It is an invitation to repentance.
- Context/Original Audience of Isaiah 55: It was meant as a piece of good news spoken to the exiles, the Israelites who became slaves in Babylon as a consequence of God’s discipline for their sins. While in Babylon, they had ample time to reflect & return back to God. The exile did not mean that God loved them less. The heart of God in discipline is to result in life with Him.

B. Truth #1 – God provides satisfaction without cost

- The Isaiah passage contains 12 imperatives, for immediate action.
- The first 4 are present in Isa 55:1, which starts with an invitation:
 - A – he who has no money
 - B- come, buy, eat!
 - B- come, buy
 - A- without money
- We earn to feed ourselves. Yet, though we eat, we are still famished, and though we drink, we are never satisfied.
- Seeking satisfaction apart from God will lead us to all sorts of sin, and to captivity (as the Israelites were, in Babylon).
- The world says, “No money, no honey,” Yet God says, come all who are hungry and thirsty, and all who have no money. God provides satisfaction without cost. Will you buy from Him?

C. Truth #2 – God probes for our good

- Isa 55:2a- if God provides for the hungry and thirsty, why are we always running after other forms of satisfaction?
- God probes not because He is ignorant, but because we are profoundly unaware of our condition, and the consequences of our path. As God probes the Israelites, He probes us.
- Where have we spent our money and energies on?
- The next 4 imperatives are in Isa 55:2a-3a:
 - A- listen to me diligently
 - B – eat good
 - B – rich food
 - A – come to me, listen
- Eating together is a sign of friendship and of our relationship with those we are eating with
- What comes from God’s hand is likened to milk and wine because what comes from His hand brings joy to our heart (wine) and nourishes us (milk). Coming to God will strengthen our inner life, and outer growth.

- God throws in 2 other benefits too: a) so that your soul lives; and b) so that you enter an everlasting covenant with Him.

D. Truth #3 – God plans good to those who listen to Him

- The litmus test for listening is obedience. Do we pause to listen every day?
- In this season of preventing the further spread of the virus, we know we are listening when we acknowledge the need for a new way of life, new norms and new SOP as exhorted by the authorities. In the same way, we know we are listening to God when we change our minds, attitudes and habits to live out His advisory, His SOP.
- Isa 55:6 was a reminder to the exiles to seek God while He may be found, and to call on Him while He is near. God was seemingly absent when they were driven out from Jerusalem. However, here God is calling out to them, and their immediate response of obedience is crucial to experience His mercy and forgiveness. The word “while” conveys both time and space, and urgency of action. Act now, not later.
- Our commitment to seek God in all seasons will determine the direction of our life.
- How we model seeking God at home to our children/grandchildren will also determine if they will call on God for themselves, and we need to act now as there is only a short window to impart influence.
- Isa 55:6-7 (emphasis on ‘Return to me’) God was speaking to those who compromised in Babylon- by holding on to Babylonian ways and thoughts, and of settling in Babylon instead of returning to Jerusalem. God is willing to show mercy and pardon, but first we must return to God (change our minds, attitudes, actions)
- There is a cross-reference of the text to 1 Cor 10 where Paul addresses the carnal thinking of the Corinth believers by asking them to remember the Israelites’ disobedience and the outcome of it – “pay attention lest you fall” A little compromise and we are no different from unbelievers.

E. Truth #4 – God’s perspective is far superior

- We have an infinite God (Isa 55:8-9).
 - A: My thoughts not your thoughts
 - B: My ways not your ways
 - C: Heavens higher than earth
 - B: My ways higher than your ways
 - A: My thoughts higher than your thoughts
- We have godly thoughts, but also many other ungodly thoughts that are hidden, unchallenged, which can lead us down the path of destruction if we are not careful (eg. rationalisation- everyone is doing it)
- God’s perspective is far superior because He is Holy, and He is not self-serving. We become more aligned with Him when we come to Him.

F. Conclusion

- The passage today contains 12 imperatives with a sense of urgency.
- To recap, God invites us to return to Him because:
 - He provides satisfaction without cost
 - Probes our way for our good
 - Plans good to those who listen to Him
 - Pardons those who turn to Him
 - His perspective is far superior to ours

- The Israelites died in the desert because they did not return to God and they serve as a warning. God is loving, but He is also serious. God is calling us to come back.
- In this season of COVID, we are urged to change our minds, attitudes and habits to ensure our safety and survival. What has changed for us since we became God's children?
- Let us use this season of social distancing to come back to God, reflect in this season of Lent and to return to God immediately, without delay, while God may be found, while He is still near, before it is too late.