

GOD'S ECONOMY (Lindfield 24th March 2019)

ISAIAH 55:1-9

In any election, whether State or Federal the economy seems to have a central focus. The Government, seeking re-election tells us what a mess they inherited and how they've fixed it and why it would be foolish to hand it back to the others. The Opposition, at the same time, tells us how the government has mucked it all up and they have the plans to make life better without damaging the accounts. The public, the voting public, is caught in the middle and we feel as though we are treated as "economic units" rather than people with day to day issues that make life either harder or more bearable. Instead of regarding society as "the Economy" it would be much better if politicians referred to us as "The Society" or "The Community" that has economic, social and moral issues to be kept in some sort of balance.

In Isaiah 55 we get a glimpse of God's economy and it is very different. God urges us, *Come all who are thirsty, come to the waters and you who have no money come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread and your labour on what does not satisfy?*

This invitation may not sound especially appealing to well-fed Christians. Many of us, after all, have all the wine, milk and bread we need. Some would much rather a nice salad or juicy hamburger. We must realise Isaiah's audience is not well fed. Israel has been in exile. The Assyrians have been very hard taskmasters. The people are exhausted and have been decimated. Desolation and death have wreaked havoc. God has punished her but not forever.

God however, refuses to give up on her. God does not break the covenantal promises He made with Abraham and David. God will again turn his face toward Israel and will bring her back – redeem her. So God calls, "Come and get it". Food, drink, all you need for life and even abundance.

God seems to feel the need to urge Israel to come to Him. God will supply all they need but Israel must first heed the call and come themselves.

Reading this passage after 3000 years it is hard to know exactly what God was offering. Is God offering literal food and drink – as He did in the desert. Providing water and food through Moses? Or is this a deeper, more spiritual food? It is sometimes hard to know just where to draw the line between material and spiritual salvation.

Clearly the spiritual food that is in God's Word is a vital aspect of God's invitation in our text. After all, the Lord calls us to listen to God and eat what is good. What God is offering is a kind of "soul food" that nourishes us as fully as any real piece of bread. What's more, God says rain and the production of wheat is an analogy for the effectiveness of God's Word. As surely as the rain falls and the crops grow, Isaiah says, God's word affects God's children in the way God desires.

Further, the Bible often uses banquet imagery as a symbol of salvation. God, after all, says, "Come and get it" to all who feel burdened. To all who are hungry for eternal life, God says, "Come and get it". To all who thirst for Christ, the Living Water, God says, "Come and get it".

Yet while it cost God in Christ virtually everything, this meal costs us nothing. When it comes to our salvation, even the most materially wealthy people are like the materially poor people who line up at soup kitchens and food pantries. In fact, the meal God offers here in Isaiah 55 isn't even available for money. Someone else has picked up the tab. All bought and paid for, that's why we are told it won't cost us anything.

We know that it is in Christ that God announces that the great meal of salvation is ready. He brings us the tasty food of forgiveness and the wine of eternal life. Christ invites us to extend open arms of faith by which we simply receive God's immeasurable grace. Even Jesus' modern disciples' celebration of the Lord's Supper reminds us that the food and drink God offers is both spiritual and material. For in the bread that we eat, chew and swallow, God is somehow present by the Spirit. In the wine and juice we smell, and swallow, God is somehow present by the Spirit.

The bread of the Lord's Supper in many ways, however, remains what God makes it to be. It's the stuff of soil and sunshine, of wheat, flour and oil, of yeast and salt. This wine and juice is the stuff of rain, warmth and grapes. So here we see the mixing of the material and spiritual. The tasty bread and juice mixed in with the salvation it symbolises.

Jesus gave us real food and real drink precisely to understand that salvation is as real and true as the food we eat and the drink we drink. Yet the material reality of the banquet the Lord invites us to share also has implications for our daily lives. It invites us to give thanks to God not only for Communion bread and wine but also for the Sunday Roast, the pizza, the cup of tea and the milkshake. After all that to which God invites us in Christ to come and get it isn't just the spiritual food of salvation, forgiveness and eternal life, it's also the very food and drink of our daily lives.

Whether the message was to Israel 3000 years ago or believers today, God's economy still works. He buys and provides all we need and offers it to us free of charge. We are much more than "Economic Units" to be manipulated by Governments but far more significantly, we are God's beloved children for whom there is no end to God's love and grace. So let's "Come and get it!"
AMEN
