

Isaiah 55:1-9/Luke 13:1-9

The words in Isaiah 55:1-9 comprise the final message to the Israelites who were in exile. In these words, God invites and prepares the Israelites to rise and move to a land their generation never knew but was promised to their ancestors. In his poetic narration, Isaiah imagines God inviting the Israelites to a banquet.

Do not be distracted by the poet's rhetoric, "...**those without money, come and buy ...**" How can we buy without money? the element of buying is still there but not with money; "... **come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price ...**" How do we buy something without a price? The element of buying is still there but no price has been fixed. The price has been already fixed and paid in verse 3 of Isaiah 55, the Abrahamic covenant is being renewed/revived in David.

Good life was guaranteed in Canaan through the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant, so no payment was needed but of course in verse 6 a condition is set for gaining entrance into the banquet, a condition was set for the Israelites to enjoy milk and honey in Canaan. A seemingly simple but not easy condition, "**Seek the Lord**". So, inhabiting Canaan was given to all the Israelites but enjoying the fruits was for those who abide by the laws of God. Occupying the land of Canaan was unconditional but enjoying the fruits was conditional. I sympathise with some of the Israelites because I think not invited to a banquet is much better than being invited and dined access to the meal. Better not to be independent than to be oppressed while in an independent state like what my friends are going through back in Zimbabwe. Better not to be married than to be abused in the name of marriage. Better not be in Church than not loved while in Church.

For the Israelites, entering Canaan was not a big deal, it was given already but knowing what to do while in Canaan was the deal. Going to Church is not a big deal because the Church doors are open to everyone but knowing what to do while in the Church is the deal. Just like going to school is not a big deal but knowing what to do while in school is the deal. Canaan was a land of milk and honey, but I want to believe that some starved, and some remained thirsty while in the land of Canaan because enjoying the benefits was conditional, "**Seek the Lord**". In other words, God is gracious to all but enjoying the fruits of grace is conditional, **seek the Lord/repent**. And the gospel of Luke present to us two

repentance stories: verses 1-5, warning of the coming judgement to those who chose not to repent, then verses 6-9, is the parable of the fig tree, pointing to God's patience, gracious nature, and desire for all of us to enjoy the fruits of grace. It is one thing for the fig tree to be in the fertile land and another thing to produce the needed fruits. So, for the fig tree to be planted in the vineyard was not a big deal but knowing what to do in the vineyard was the deal. The vineyard was a common metaphor for the people of Israel. The seed of God's love was planted through Abraham but being a Jew was not enough guarantee for salvation, in verses 1-9 of Luke 13, Jesus is reminding the Pharisees, and other Jewish religious sects that on top of being Jews, they were to repent, "**seek the Lord**" or else they were going to face judgement.

We thank God for the grace of being Christians/believers but that's not enough, we should always repent and seek God's face and Lent provide us an opportunity to focus and pursue this goal. We thank God for the grace of being in the vineyard, but if we are not careful, we will remain "baren" while in the vineyard. May God continue to be gracious to all of us as we seek his face and as we desire to bear good fruits. Amen.