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Sermon preached by Mr J H Gosden
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 24 April 1949

ISAIAH 55 verses 1 and 2

Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters
and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea come, buy
wine and milk without money and without price

Here is the character pointed out the Lord speaks to - a thirsting person: "Ho, everyone that thirsteth". Naturally man thirsts, craves after, desires and seeks with avidity something to gratify his carnal mind according to his various desires. something to be given, to be enjoyed, to be possessed in this world. Some thirst after money. "The love of money", we read, "is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6 v 10) And if the Lord permits one of His people to go on in his covetousness after that, he will find the solemn truth of that word. Or some covet after the empty name, and fame and honour of this world, the enjoyment of their fellow-creatures' smile and deference. Some covet after, and follow with all the powers of their mind, the empty pleasures, and indeed today, if there ever was a day when that was true, it is now: "In the last days men shall be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God". (2 Timothy 3 verses 1-4) - empty pleasures. And there are many things men thirst after, crave for, move after to gain and enjoy; but not the whole of the earth, not the whole of the universe, has ever yet satisfied one single individual. I believe, if worldly people were honest, they would have to say if they sat down quietly and reflected, even out of a natural conscience, they are not satisfied. There is no rest in earthly gains, pleasures, sport, but rather the reverse. The more there is of that kind of thing, the more restlessness. And yet, alas, man has no notion of God, of his need of a God of mercy and salvation, until God takes him in hand and creates in his soul a thirst for Himself. If any of you can say as before a heart-

searching God, "There's nothing here can satisfy, nor gold, nor house, nor land;" "The God of spirits only can fill up the vast desires of man", my vast desires; if you can really say you thirst for the living God, you have reason to fall down before Him and thank Him for supplying everything else to you. "Arise ye and depart", said the prophet to His people, "this is not your rest; it is polluted". That is written in one of the minor prophets, but it is engraven upon the experience of all the hearts of the Lord's people. "This is not your rest". "Here we have no continuing city" says Paul, "but we seek one to come". And what a mercy it is that there is something that will satisfy the human soul, that will gratify the deepest desires that we can ever have! And that is the knowledge of God, the knowledge of His love, the knowledge of His grace, communion with Himself; and this the Lord calls His people to. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1 verse 9)

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth". When the Lord was upon earth, He condescendingly instructed many with whom He came in contact, manifesting Himself to some in His grace, and to many more in His providential goodness and skill. One woman He met at the well and said to her "Give Me to drink"; but she said, "Art Thou greater than Jacob, who gave us this well?" He said He would give her living water; that those who drink of that well would thirst again. But He said this: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." And then He began to teach her, to show her her need, her sins, to give her to know that He knew her life. "Come", said she, "see a Man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" And then He showed her the connection between worship and salvation. And there is a very distinct and inseparable connection between worship and salvation; for none but saved sinners can worship; none but convicted sinners feeling their need of that which the world cannot supply, ever thirst so as to be unsatisfied without God, and to be satisfied with God. The poor worldling is rather an object of pity than otherwise,

following with all his might and main after empty bubbles, cobwebs, that will only defile and deceive.

"Ho everyone that thirsteth" for something in his soul that none but God can give. What is this thirst? It is a want, it is a sign of life, and it is a sense of need. Thirst can be exceedingly painful, and also naturally dangerous, to be thirsty and nothing to satisfy that thirst. And it can be, and is, very painful for a thirster after God when that thirst is not satisfied. Some people thirst after religion, and religion they have. It is a comparatively easy thing to acquire religion. Look at the world today. Notwithstanding the wide spread profanity, what a number of religions there are! Men follow and seek to gratify their carnal minds with religion, but there is no satisfaction there. The immortal soul is capable of solidity, needs substance such as only God has to bestow. Durable righteousness and riches are with God, that will satisfy the soul; not those vain things that have no durability.

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters". There are waters, there is a fountain of water, a river full of water in God, that will satisfy fully every immortal soul that receives it. What is it, first of all? Well, it is life. I said just now that thirst is a sign of life, but unless that thirst is satisfied, how can life be maintained or satisfied? Life is in God. And what is life? God's favour, God's smile, God's presence, God's love, God's mercy, God's forgiveness, God's salvation, God's truth, God's righteousness - all these things are in the river of God, belong to these waters. And if we thirst for them there will be this - a deep sense of unworthiness. Ah, every child of God, every quickened convicted sinner, believes and feels that he is unworthy of the least mercy, that he can never merit God's favour, His favour being better than life; and yet he can never be satisfied without it. If you can be satisfied without God's favour, you may have the favour of countless of your fellow men, but what a poor business that will be when all that comes to an end! But in the favour of God is life and gladness. Said David "There be many that say,

who will show us any good?" That is what our nature says. We are always looking out for our own gain, and when we gain something we want to gain more, and there is no good in it. "Who will show us any good, something a little better than we have now? And no good in it, no holiness, no joy, nothing wholesome about it. But David had something better in his heart, better than all this. He said "Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon me". That is what he wanted to satisfy him, a smile from heaven, that smile of Christ that will lift the drooping soul from the gates of hell to heaven.

"And he that hath no money". The gospel is so free that it offends the most of people. It is too free for the most of human nature. Man would have a part of the credit, but does not like to know his bankruptcy, and so he would make God a debtor. Said the Lord to some: "Go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice." If you bring some money to buy the satisfaction that God has to give in the gospel, He will just say to you: "Go; go and learn - learn what you need and what you are, and then come". None but empty penniless bankrupts, lost people, ever will come to the terms of the gospel: "And he that hath no money". And yet, so inveterate is that principle within us of unbelief and independence, that we stumble at this. The Jews stumbled at Christ. He was the Rock of offence; and why? Because they clave to their own righteousness. But what did Christ say? "Except a man hate father, mother, brother, sister, and lose his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." And what is it to lose our own life? Why, it is to renounce our own goodness, to cease from our own works, and to venture to come penniless, guilty, helpless, worthless, to come upon the alone foundation of divine grace and invitation. Christ said when upon earth: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." A very wide word that, a wonderful invitation; but very few hear it and obey it. And why? They will rest somewhere else, or try to do so. But if we are well weighted with guilt, if we are labouring with temptation, and sin, and sin-bought trouble and fears, there will be a time when we shall gladly lay down our arms and renounce our own righteous-

ness, and find that the terms of the gospel are precisely suited to our condition. God's grace is free; mercy never can be bought. It takes a great deal to bring some of us to our senses, to bring us to realise the terms of divine grace and the distinction between grace and works. If salvation "be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work. If by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." O but the need there is of being well instructed in our condition, so that there is nothing short of free grace, "sovereign grace o'er sin abounding", that can meet our cases! Then we shall be willing: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power." And the Lord has a power which He exercises in His people, not only to bring them down into a sense of their true condition as bankrupts and lost sinners, but a power to bring them to Himself. This is sovereign grace. "All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

"Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat". How can we buy without money? Buying seems to set forth an exchange, and it is. Every coming sinner proves there is an exchange at Christ's market; not of money, but exchange of state. O yes, what do you bring? You bring your rags, your filthy garments, your innumerable sins like a thick cloud; you bring your shame, the shame of your poverty, your unrighteousness, your weakness; you bring yourself, your whole, the whole of your unbelief and iniquity, in your hand. There is something to bring, and there is an exchange made.

Nothing but sin I Thee can give;
Nothing but love shall I receive.

said one, and I believe it is true.

"He that hath no money; come ye buy and eat." It is something more than a mere mental coming, more than a notional coming, more than an idea or theory about the gospel. It is

assimilating, receiving, and appropriating for oneself. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you". And I believe some of you know the difference between some attraction in the gospel as seeing the truth of it, and eating the gospel, appropriating it for yourselves. "To see good bread and wine, is not to eat and drink"; and yet I would say this, few see by the eye of faith the blessed provision Christ has made in His gospel, the bread that He has, "I am the Bread of life; and the wine that He gives, even His redeeming love. If you see Christ in His suitability as the blessed Redeemer and Saviour of the lost, it will have a vital twofold influence. It will kill your despair, it will prevent you from lying down in sullen silence; it will draw you to Himself. There are invisible attractions in Christ. Whenever He is revealed, there will be felt a motion toward Himself: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." But then, this buying and eating, receiving and appropriating, enjoying, this is something very close. It means experience in the soul of what Christ is and has to bestow. For instance, when a person by faith is enabled to assimilate the doctrine of the atonement and feels in his heart the peace of God through His atonement, there is nourishment ministered through the word, that doctrine, so that he feels the strength and satisfaction of it. It brings in pardon then, and there is no greater blessing, no sweeter enjoyment, than to be a forgiven sinner, forgiven by God. He drinks the precious blood of Christ. I know the word is symbolical, but you who know what it is to receive the atonement will realise the propriety of the Holy Spirit's terms. To drink and eat that precious blood and body by faith, this is nourishment, this brings sweet satisfaction.

"Come ye, buy and eat - assimilate. Said Jeremiah: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them, and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart". Do you find the Scriptures sometimes satisfy your soul? Do you find the doctrines of the Bible, one here and there, come into your heart with vivifying influence, bringing you into a state of health and vigour,

bringing gladness to your heart, strength to your soul, satisfaction to your mind? For whenever a child of God receives the truth in any branch of it, in any blessed promise, in any doctrine, there is a conveyance to him of Christ. He is the Bread of life. He said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Now you look at this point and see how you stand with regard to it. "Buy wine and milk without money and without price". As if the Lord is emphasising the freeness of it, and the truth that the "poorer the wretch, the welcomer" he is to partake of the rich provision that Christ has made in the gospel.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" This seems to show what is so sadly true, and which, being true, is very solemn. Some people complain of bondage all the year round, and speak in their complaints as if they are complaining against God and His gospel, as if He were niggardly, rather than of themselves and their carnality. O how we may unwittingly and very grievously dishonour the Lord by our murmurings against Him, when we ought to put our mouth in the dust and confess our carnality! "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." I suppose some of you who fear God would not dare to assert your guiltlessness concerning that evil which God charged upon His people of old: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." Very solemn! And He appeals to them in that 2 of Jeremiah: "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, a land of darkness? Wherefore say My people, We are lords; we will come no more unto Thee?" Our idolatry, our carnality, our sinful unreadiness for spiritual exercise, our pride, our religious activities, our self-righteousness - all these things are not "bread". We may spend our money, our time, our strength in cultivating them; but there is no satisfaction there.

"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?" You will only labour in vain if you seek satisfaction apart from Christ and Him

crucified. If you seek it in and from your own cistern, it will be a broken cistern. There is only one place of satisfaction and rest, that is, Christ and Christ crucified. Wherefore God expostulates with His people, and if He does so with you, it will be effectual to bring you down in confession, and it will correct you. Ah, we do make ourselves fools! We do turn away from the Lord, at least in heart, and forget Him, and seek some satisfaction in self or some idol, the chief of which is self. But the Lord says, "From all your idols will I cleanse you; I will be your King, I will be your God; where is any other that shall save thee?" And Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" He will make you willing to leave them and leave self behind, and come to His market and have this blessed exchange, and be delivered from your guilt and granted His sweet pardon, delivered from your filthy rags and clothed in His precious righteousness, delivered from the power and prevalence of indwelling sin, and have the plentiful supply of grace from His fountain fulness.

My friends, there is satisfaction nowhere else but in the Lord: "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?". "Hearken diligently unto Me." You may say: "But dare I hearken diligently? May I think intently, personally of them - invitations and pardons, and grace, and covenant? May I venture to think so as to hope to participate therein? I, an unworthy, bankrupt sinner?" Well, it is so, and each one will be surprised at the freeness of it. "Hearken diligently unto Me." "Hearken unto Me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that fear the Lord God". It would be well if we hearkened to the Lord against all the voices which are contrary to our interests. Unbelief - O how it does claim us! Scepticism, how it sneers at our holy religion! And that dreadful principle of pride that is within us, it will not be beholden to free grace. But "hearken diligently unto Me". And the Lord says that, in communicating His salvation, righteousness, and His love, He is glorified; God is glorified. It is beyond our conception to believe it, apart from the Spirit's power, that God can be glorified in our

comfort, our salvation, our happiness, our holiness, and that through the merits of Christ.

"Hearken diligently unto Me and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Some people have thought that if we just get within the portals of heaven, we should be satisfied. Well, we shall, but "let your soul delight itself in fatness". When I was a young man, I believe the Lord gave me a sense of His pardoning love, and at the time for some moments there was a great objection in my mind for this reason - I felt so utterly unworthy for such a blessing; nor did I seem to dare to receive it, until the Lord pressed it home, and then I had to receive it. Poor sinner, it will not dishonour the Lord for you to receive His pardon, for you to rejoice in His salvation. He is a complete Saviour. He is made of God to His people wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that whoever glories must glory in Him alone. Yes, you will glory in Him, and not in yourself, glory in receiving Him into your poor heart, a full Christ, full of grace, and truth, and salvation, and there is delight in that. "Let your soul delight itself in fatness". There is not much of this today apparently in the churches, and that is not because the Lord is not unchangeably the same. May He give us to diligently hearken, and to realise in experience a little of this rich text.

AMEN.