

Seek The Lord

by Mack Tomlinson

This sermon focuses on the call to seek the Lord while He may be found, emphasizing the need to forsake our own ways and thoughts, and return to God for mercy and pardon. The message highlights the gracious Gospel invitation, the warning of seeking God while He is near, the conditions of forsaking and returning, the promise of God's mercy and abundant pardon, and the personal responsibility to respond to the call to seek the Lord.

Scripture: Isaiah 55:6, Proverbs 1:28, Psalms 32:6, Proverbs 29:1, Luke 14:26, Psalms 45:10, Matthew 11:28, Revelation 22:17

Topics: "Seeking God", "Repentance and Mercy"

Description

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Transcript

Well, could we turn to the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 55, Isaiah 55. Two verses, familiar verses to Bible readers. Isaiah has been called the gospel evangelist of the whole Old Testament in a unique way.

There's more messianic prophecies about Christ in one lump area, perhaps in Isaiah, than any other Old Testament section. So this isn't a messianic prophecy as much as it is a call to Messiah. A gospel scream by the prophet.

So let's read verses 6 and 7. Isaiah 55, Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts.

Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. Let's pray together again.

Our gracious God, here we are again. Again, before us, we possess the book of all the ages. The Word that will never perish.

The Word of the Lord the Bible endures forever. And here we are. We have been entrusted with it.

Today, don't let us get used to it. But freshly make us in awe of what You say. Today, together we ask You to open our eyes to see afresh what we need to see today in the Bible.

We ask You together to give us eyes to see, the inner spiritual ears to hear today what our Good and Great Shepherd would speak. And Lord, give us hearts that are freshly tender and receptive. Because every heart here is needy.

But every heart here is not prepared like we should be. So right now, we ask You, Lord, Blessed Spirit, take our hearts, take our minds, and in these moments, work in us. Speak to us.

And make Your Word be alive and precious. We think of the Old Testament narrative where it says the Word of the Lord was precious in those days. So Lord, today, do that for us.

We look to You with thanksgiving and with confidence. In Christ's name, Amen. The first three words alone could be the entire text.

Seek the Lord. Isn't that a summation of the whole revelation of God and redemptive history? In a nutshell, three words. Seek the Lord.

Think of all the implications there. There's a God. There's a living God as Hudson Taylor said.

He has spoken in the Bible. He means what He says and He will do all He's promised. So, seek the Lord.

The first three words alone could be the entire text. But both verses give fuller meaning to the first three words, don't they? If you just read the first three words, you have a little bit, but you read both verses, even just two verses, and it's just enlarged. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

Call on Him while He's near. Let the wicked one... Now, children, some of you, if you don't know Christ, you are wicked. It's not the drunkard you see and the homeless guy, the messed up person on drugs.

Every one of us, children to the worst criminal out there, we are wicked until we seek God and come to know Him. So don't eliminate yourself when you hear Isaiah says, let the wicked forsake his way. Don't say, because you love to obey your parents and you try hard, don't say, well, I'm not wicked.

Let the wicked person forsake his own way and the unrighteous one his thoughts and let him return to the Lord. And what will God do? He will have mercy on him. And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

The entire message of God to all men really is right there. From the Garden of Eden to the end of history, God has called out and will continually call out, seek Me and live. Seek the Lord.

That's God's call from the Garden. What did He say to Adam? Adam, Adam, fill in the blank. God came seeking and calling.

To the end of Revelation 22, we're in the last five verses of the Bible. It's capitalized in verse 17. Four times, John says, the Spirit and the bride say what? Come.

Let him who hears say, come. Let him who's thirsty, come. Let him who desires, let him come and take of the water of life.

If there was a bottle of water here right now, I'd just take a sip. I'd enjoy it. But four times at the end of the Bible is this call.

Same thing as Isaiah is saying here at the end of Revelation. Four times, come. Come.

Come. Come drink. Come take of the water of life.

No one's excluded. Everyone's under that call no matter their color, creed, condition, social status, economic status, brilliance, not educated, needy, cool, not cool. It doesn't matter.

It's you and I that's included. And every person you know. And those children in your home.

So, let's just see what Isaiah says here. Seek me and live. Seek me, says the Lord.

How many diversions and distractions keep us from just doing that? I was thinking about the definition of a distraction this week and I thought a distraction is something that's trying to get your attention so you won't focus on what you need to focus on. A diversion, rather, is when that distraction calls you off and you get off course and you leave what you're doing. How many diversions and distractions in life become things that just cause us to cool off and seeking God? With a singular focus, with a whole heart, daily, in private Bible reading, when you're working in the heat, when you wake up to read, when you have family worship, children.

A time of family worship is meant for your heart to not just listen to dad or mom, but to go there and seek Him. Corporate worship. A prayer meeting.

The men study. The women study. All of life is about one thing.

Seek the Lord. And here, Isaiah is the voice of God to Israel as powerfully as any crying out to Israel to seek God. What's his emphasis here? Isaiah 55 is a clear Gospel chapter.

You read it all in context and you say Gospel, Gospel, Gospel. Gospel call, Gospel duty, Gospel promise. Because we have all that in these two verses.

This chapter is a chapter of good news, Gospel calls, Gospel duty, and Gospel gracious promises of mercy. So what does Isaiah this morning say to us just in these two verses? Well, the words seek the Lord imply something. It means we're not all with Him initially.

I heard on our trip this past month, I heard someone say this. We had conversations. I heard someone say this.

Well, I've just believed in God. I've just known God all my life. Implicit in seek the Lord is we don't know God.

We're not with Him initially. We don't have Him, and He doesn't have us. Right? It means we're not in relationship if we hear in our sin, in our unbelief, in our being away from Him, if we hear in our present condition, seek the Lord, and we've never sought Him truly and we've not come to know Him, it means we need Him and we must get to Him because if we don't seek God genuinely, sincerely, we will never know Him.

Right? So if you're not a Christian today, and you ever have hope of being in heaven, of having your sins forgiven, of having a relationship like you see some around you have, if there's ever any hope of you knowing the Lord, it's time to start seeking. The Lord isn't that right? It is true. And this equally applies to all of us, the believer and the unbeliever.

The repentant person and the unrepentant. The old and the young. We have truly older people here, and we have really young people here.

We have babies here that don't have a clue what I'm talking about. The rationale's not there yet. But some of you really young ones, the three-year-old, the four-year-old, the five-year-old, the seven-year-old, the eight-year-old, are you hearing me right now? You are called today in your life to seek after the Lord because He says, if anyone will seek Me with all their heart, what? They'll find Me.

What a promise! So, let me not bog down. Let's keep sailing here. This text is perhaps the clearest and plainest Gospel summary, Gospel duty, Gospel promise in all the Old Testament.

So let's really let it freshly sink in. No more amazing words could a sinner hear, could anyone hear, than the beginning of verse 6 to the end of verse 7. God's available. Seek Him.

Turn to Him. Turn to Him. Even in your wickedness and your moral sickness and your failure and your sins, forsake your own way.

Forget your own thoughts and return, and if you do, what's going to happen? Verse 7, He will have mercy and abundantly pardon. The glory of this is just beyond ability to really take it in. The whole Bible, this passage is a micro-summary of the whole Bible, as is John 3.16 in a way.

I think it was S. Lewis Johnson or John Murray, the Scottish professor, who said John 3.16 is a miniature Bible. It's certainly a miniature full declaration of the Gospel. So is Isaiah 55, 6, and 7. The essence of all biblical revelation.

So, dear ones, this morning in these moments, let the drama of this, let the excitement of this, the freshness of this, the passion of this, the emotion of this, of God's fullness and freshness of His heart toward sinners and toward all saints, this one lifetime offer, let it grip us today. Zero in on it. Feel it.

Hear the Word of God in your heart today through Isaiah for us to freshly in new ways, in increased ways, in focused ways, even in the midst of a battle with sin where you're bogged down and you can't lift your head up, freshly say to your heart, I'm going to seek God today more. Lord, here I am, a seeker. Lead me into seeking.

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee. I'm here, Lord, afresh to seek You and know You. So, let's hear what the Lord says here.

There are five truths here. We'll go through them quickly. So, here's what we've got.

In this text, we have a divine invitation. We have a real warning. We have a clear condition.

We have a glorious promise. And we have a personal responsibility. Here they are again.

An invitation, a warning, a promise, a condition, and a responsibility. First, the invitation. Where's that? Well, verse 6. Seek the Lord.

God's saying, seek the Lord. Call upon Him. The whole text is a massive invitation connected with promises.

All of it is an invitation. And it's Christ's invitation. So this is His Word.

The Spirit of Christ inspiring the prophet Isaiah. Christ is speaking through Isaiah to Israel. And He's speaking to us by His Spirit through His Word today.

This exceedingly extravagant, wonderful, amazing invitation. Seek the Lord. What's all implicit in that? You can.

You should. You'll find Him. He wants to be sought.

What an invitation this is. Think of all it says. And think of Jesus' gracious gospel ministry.

He goes forth. Even John the Baptist, the rough one, he cries it out. He sees Jesus coming.

And what does he say to Israel? Behold! Behold! The Lamb of God! Who does what? Demolishes. Kills. Takes away.

The sins of what? The world. John's able to get it. Then Jesus comes.

It says He comes preaching good news. He says His first sermon that the home folks got quite angry about when He started deploying it. He says, this day, the Scripture is fulfilled in your ears.

Isaiah 61. Good news to the poor. Sight to the blind, etc.

So Jesus, He came broadcasting this good news. And so, wouldn't it be amazing to hear more of the gospel sermons and exhortations as they were journeying? And there they preached the gospel. To hear the gracious words of Christ calling out to others to find rest and forgiveness in Him.

Well, here Isaiah is broadcasting this viral, universal invitation that worldwide, over all of history and all of time, is the newsflash of the ages. Have you heard somebody on TV or radio say this? There's news that just came in. We're going to our reporter on location.

What can you tell us? Jehovah says through Isaiah, Isaiah is the reporter on location. Isaiah, what can you report? Seek the Lord. That's the news.

Seek the Lord. Israel, seek the Lord. Everyone must see this as to them personally, one-on-one.

God extends this invitation to your heart right where you are, in your condition, with your struggles, whatever your case is. God invites us to Himself in His Son through the call of the Gospel. The most gracious invitation all for mankind has ever heard anywhere at any time.

That a holy God would condescend to accomplish full redemption for rebels and haters of God, and then extend lovingly, tenderly, graciously, convincingly such an amazing invitation? It should and it does take our breath away. When Linda and I stood three weeks ago, we got to the south rim of the Grand Canyon and we went over to the rim, we really didn't have words. Wow! That's all you got when you see it the first time.

This is bigger than the Grand Canyon. Infinitely bigger. Infinitely more glorious.

Infinitely more wow that God would condescend to have mercy on sinners that should already be perishing forever. And you're not now. And you're hearing words this morning from Isaiah.

Seek the Lord. What's our excuse to not today just say, this is me. I'm all in.

I hadn't been. I've been half-hearted. I've been hit and miss.

But today, by God's grace, this is changing. I'm going to be a seeker of God. Because the Lord says, look, I want your heart.

I don't want your performance. I don't want your goodness. I don't want your Bible knowledge.

I don't want your service. Before, I want your heart. Just seek me.

So the invitation's there. Seek the Lord. Secondly, there's a warning here.

See the warning? This serious warning. It's implicit in the text in one word. Which word is it? Somebody tell me.

While. It's there twice. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

Call upon Him while He's near. What's implicit in that? Exactly. You ever heard the phrase, this is a limited time offer? It is.

How many people have perished when they think someday, when I feel more like it, when I deal with things when my kids are grown, when I won't offend my parents, or I won't make my siblings hate me more because they hate God. A more convenient day. A day that I'm more ready.

I'll consider becoming a Christian. That's delusional. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

Call on Him while. Somebody said, there was one thief on the cross that no one would have to despair. But there was only one so that no one can foolishly presume that they can get in whenever they want to.

The psalmist said in Psalm 32, let all pray unto Him in a day when He may be found. When's the day you're going to get saved and seek the Lord? It's going to be the day you're alive and you face it today. You're not going to seek God tomorrow.

Because tomorrow, if you think about it, it's today. Today, if you hear His voice. What? Do not harden your heart.

Today, now is the day of salvation. So this is a real warning here. While He may be found.

While He's near. Now you go to Proverbs. In fact, I want you to look at this.

Solomon gives this astounding warning. The most severe. The most threatening.

The most certain warning of those who hear the truth and keep turning away. Of those who know they're to seek God and they refuse. They're just procrastinators to the nth degree.

What does Proverbs 1.28 say? Well, look at verse 24. First of all, because I have called and you what? Refused. Because you disdained My counsel and would have none of it.

Look at verse 28. There's a day, people in distress and misery and fear. They'll call on Me, God says, but what does verse 28 say? I won't answer.

I will not answer. They will seek Me even diligently and they will not find Me. Why? Verse 29.

Because they hated knowledge and they did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would have none of My counsel. That means I want nothing to do with Christianity or any kind of religion.

I don't care what the Bible says. I'm not interested. Thank you, God.

Leave me alone. All you Christians, leave me alone. I don't want any of it.

They would have none of My counsel and they despised My every rebuke. Look at verse 31. Here's a time when the wild is gone.

He won't be found. He's not near anymore. Therefore, they will eat the fruit of their own ways and be filled with their own fancies.

For the turning away of the simple will slay them. Rebellion will kill a person if they hear the Gospel and keep refusing it. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

And the complacency, verse 32, of fools will destroy them. Rebellion kills the soul and complacency will destroy you. Remember what Proverbs 29 says? Anybody can quote it? Quote it loud for me.

He that being often reprov'd and hardens his heart shall what? Suddenly be cut off without any future remedy or hope. Now that should put the fear of God in the heart of any person here today who knows they don't know the Lord. Look, why are you gambling with your soul? If you had \$100,000 in the bank you wanted to accrue, would you go to Vegas and gamble it? Some fools have, but you wouldn't.

Why are you gambling your soul? He who being often reprov'd. Seek Me and live. Call on the Lord while He's near.

The Gospel comes. The truth comes to you. Your conscience is affected.

And suddenly, you harden yourself. You say, no, what would they think? It would displease my family. Whatever the excuse is, that's hardening, hardening, hardening.

One day, the person will harden for the last time. They're giving over. And I don't care how sincere you get.

I don't care how broken you are over the consequences of sin. There's coming a day the warning is true. God won't be available.

And whose fault it is, is it? Not His. It's yours. You did what Solomon warned against here today, now.

God says, seek the Lord while. Thirdly, here, there's some conditions. Look at verse 7. You know, none of us, often we don't read the tiny print that you need a magnifying glass for.

Terms and conditions may apply. Some of them I can't read even with a magnifying glass. Like those guys on the radio that talk rapid fire.

You can't understand one word. They have to get that in. Terms and conditions.

The Gospel has terms and conditions. What is it? Verse 7. Look at it. Let the wicked forsake.

Let him return. The two conditions are forsake and return. Now, these aren't in small print.

The Bible has the terms and conditions in big letters clearly stated right in the Grace and Temptation. Forsake and return. What does forsake really mean? Well, it really means this in Gospel terms.

It means to give up. I'm done. I'm done running the show.

What's that got me? Nothing but sin, misery, condemnation. And guilt. I'm done.

I'm forsaking my own way. I have thoughts all the time. Well, what if? Well, I'm too scared.

What's it going to cost me? Stop your own thoughts. Forsake all your own way and your own thoughts. That's what's implicit here.

Give up. Surrender. Just turn over.

Stop the rebellion as the king in front of you says, seek Me. Okay. I'm done.

I'm done with me. Lord, I do forsake. Remember Jesus said? It's astounding.

He said, if anyone comes to Me and does not hate father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters and his own life also, he can't be My disciple. You're not in. You won't be in.

So seeking God means all or nothing. Yes. Jesus said, whoever of you who doesn't forsake all cannot be My disciple.

Now that means when it comes to my soul before God and my seeking God, I don't think about what my parents will think I'm in. I don't think about what my siblings will think. They don't factor in I'm in a sick God.

What will this cost me with my job? Forget it. It's an amazing thing in Psalm 45. The sons of Korah say to the king's daughters, listen and consider, listen and consider.

The king greatly desires your beauty. He is, and this is the text in that psalm, He is your Lord, worship Him. But he says to them, forget your own people and your father's house.

He's your Lord, worship Him. What will you let keep you from seeking God and living? A relationship? Forsake it. A sin? Forsake it.

Your own stubborn will? Break it. Plow up the fallow ground and say I'm going to forsake and I'm going to return. That's the Gospel terms and conditions.

It's right there. Seek the Lord while He may be found. Let the sinful person forsake his rebellious life and his ways and thoughts.

And verse 7, this wonderful, wonderful positive condition. Let him return. Come home.

Come home. Ye who are sinners, come home. The prodigal son in that pig pen had a moment.

He came to himself. He came to his senses. And he said, I'm going to go home to my father.

Return. Return. Right now, where you are in this moment, do you want to return? Do you need to return? Some of you have heard and heard and heard and heard, and it moves you.

But you don't move out of that neutrality to say I'm coming. Today, come and bow to Him in your heart. Say, You're my Lord.

I worship You. I forsake all. Lord Jesus, here I am.

Like the song says, when we return, it says mercy came a-running like a prisoner set free. When the sin that I carried was all I could see, mercy came a-running to me. And that's what Isaiah says here.

Seek, forsake, return, and mercy is all you'll get. Which leads us to think about the gracious promises of our Savior. His free offer of His love and forgiveness.

Everybody in here is clear that it's real. It's genuine. It's a genuine offer.

It doesn't matter what you think you are in the past. It doesn't matter if you think you're elect or non-elect. That's a foolish logic when the gracious Savior says come to Me and live.

Seek Me and live. All that stuff goes out the window. You don't start thinking except I've been called.

I'm welcomed. He's wooing me. He's calling to me.

I can come. I need to come. I will come.

Lord, here I am. These gracious, gracious invitations by Jesus Christ freely offered to anyone, anywhere, anytime to whosoever will. I love those words.

Years ago, when I came to see the sovereign grace of God and the doctrines of grace, when I would read those words, I'd kind of, ooh, uh... Does that really mean what it says? It means what it says. Whosoever will. Whosoever will.

The broadness of the Gospel offer whosoever will may come. So, let's move on here. The gracious invitation is seek the Lord.

Forsake your own way. Return. What are you going to find? The table is spread.

The Gospel feast is ready and fresh. Just come. Just come.

Seek the Lord and He will freely forgive and welcome and pardon you. So we've heard Isaiah's invitation and the warning and these conditions, but verse 7 has this certain wonderful promise. And I've been getting into it.

What's the promise? The end of verse 7. If a sinner will take heed and do what verse 6 and the first part of 7 actually calls us to, here's what we get. Here's the results. He will have mercy on you.

He will abundantly pardon. That's the certain wonderful promise of God's free, glorious, good news. It's certain and guaranteed.

Whoever seeks Him while He's near, whoever forsakes his own rebellion and returns only finds mercy and grace. Only finds a Father-welcoming home again. Let's have a feast.

Kill the fatted calf. Get a ring. Get a robe.

Clean him up. Group hug. Let the older son pardon the group hug, wouldn't he? Will you see this morning and face the graciousness of God saying to you this morning, seek the Lord.

The Christian today, the backslider today, the seeker, the rebellious one, the sinfulness and neediest person, Christ says, will you? But some hearts say this, I'm so broken. I'm such a failure. Even recently, I'm such a failure.

I've been so defeated with such sins and mistakes. My heart is so ashamed. I can't even lift up the eyes of my heart and face the Lord.

I'm too scared. I'm too condemned. I want to.

I need to. I dread telling Him. I dread facing Him.

What's the answer if that's you? You think about seeking Him in your defeated quagmire of struggle. You think about seeking Him and you say to yourself, if I just come seeking, then what will I find? Here's the question. If you turn to Him and start seeking Him, what is He like? What is Jesus Christ like? Is He a begrudging, a fence-holding Savior? You fail Me too much.

I'm tired of you. Is He withholding grace and forgiveness? What's He like? What's He said to you? And what will He do if you look up and just seek God all over again? You know. You know.

You already know. Believe the truth. Stop looking inward.

Believe the truth and look up into the loving, forgiving, welcoming arms and eyes and heart of this gentle and lowly Savior. The freshness that comes to any of us from a focused, new seeking. The direction it brings to our souls and our mind.

The hope it secures. The stability it secures in our life and our walk. Listen, and in a marriage, if one person has a heart to seriously seek God and the other one does not, your marriage is in trouble.

And the fruit of that will be struggle and struggle and division. Because Jesus said, the Gospel comes to bring a what? Sword. A man's enemies will be those where? In his own household.

So, if your marriage is faulty right now about one with a full heart to seek God and another divided heart and struggling heart, get together on this and face this. And if you're here in this church, maybe new, maybe not, somebody said one time, you know, where we used to go, we could come in and leave and nobody know about our soul and not have to really be transparent and the pastors didn't know us. If you think you can be here and hide and be half-hearted and not seek the Lord, it just won't work, will it? But God has you here for such a time as this in your life to say to us, let's seek God.

What's your hindrance? What's our answer? You know, everything about our church, its goal is to seek God. Our women study. The women who go there, they should go to seek God and know Him more.

So, those of you who willfully neglected and could go, why don't you go? Men too. The prayer meetings are there where we can seek God together. They're about seeking God.

We're not doing activities and religious stuff to fill the calendar. Everything, our corporate worship, is about seeking God. And today, we're going to have the Lord's Supper.

You know what that ought to be in every one of our hearts? A vertical focus. The Lamb of God. My God and my Savior.

His body was broken for me. Your body was broken for me. Your blood was shed for me.

This time is an act of worship. I'm seeking You, Lord Jesus of Friends. You who died for me, shall I not renew my love and covenant and heart to Thee? Here I am, Lord, to seek You with all my heart.

Do that today. Forget everybody else. And go to Christ who's here to be sought and experienced.

I love Bonnard's hymn. I came to Jesus as I was, weary, worn, and sad. I found in Him a resting place.

And He has made me glad. For every one of us, in the quietness and the privacy of our hearts and our soul, it's Christ in us. He's calling.

Seek Me. Will you? Will we? We all have to work out that salvation. We all have to say, I love that story in the Old Testament.

The famine's on. And there's those lepers. And they know there might be food over there in that town.

They don't know they might get killed if they go. And one of them said, what did he say? Why are we going to sit here until we die? They arose and they went. They found food and spoils and they lived.

Seeking the Lord. You going to stay where you are spiritually and just wither and die? Or could this day be a covenant of our renewal? And you and I know we can't just work this out on our own. We are poor and needy and we need grace afresh from the Holy Spirit to say, oh, Lord, work this in my heart.

I want to be a seeker earnestly, fully, consistently of the living God and this great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, I'm hearing Your voice in Isaiah right now and I'm responding. Here I am, Lord.

I'm all in. I will seek You and love You by Your grace the whole journey. Let's pray.

Lord, as we wait upon You, just cause us to respond, to cast off fear, to repent of pride, to get real. As our brother Zeke said this morning, to stop pretending we can't pretend. Take this time now and work in our hearts.

Let's just respond to the Lord in these quiet moments. You respond to Him right now. Gracious Savior, we would echo the songwriter.

I am coming home. Coming, Lord, to Thee. You said there through Matthew, coming to me, all you labor and heavy laden.

And you'll find rest. I'll give you rest. So let these moments, let this day be a day of spiritual transaction and experience with You in our hearts.

Blessed be Your name, O Lord. Thank You in Christ's name, Amen.

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