

11th Sunday after Pentecost
August 20, 2017

Pastor Jasper Sellnow
Mount Olive Lutheran Church

Theme: Are you satisfied?
Text: **Isaiah 55:1-5**

55 “Come, all you 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.
2 Why spend money on what is not bread,
 and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
 and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.
3 Give ear and come to me;
 hear me, that your soul may live.
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,
 my faithful love promised to David.
4 See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,
 a leader and commander of the peoples.
5 Surely you will summon nations you know not,
 and nations that do not know you will hasten to you,
because of the LORD your God,
 the Holy One of Israel,
 for he has endowed you with splendor.”

The Word of God we'll consider today is our 1st Lesson from Isaiah 55, let's begin with prayer:

*O lavish Love, that didst prepare A table bounteous as thy heart
That men might leave their puny care
And taste and see how good thou art,
This day we raise Our song of praise adoring thee.
Amen. (CW 335 vs. 2 abbr.)*

He was never quite satisfied. His mother Monica was a Christian, but his father wasn't and he grew up never feeling a connection to Christianity. In fact, for much of his early life he searched for answers everywhere but the Bible. In his autobiography he wrote about a time as teenager when he and some friends stole loads of pears from a neighbor's tree. And he recalled that he didn't steal them to satisfy a hungry stomach, but to satisfy a desire to do something thrilling. Thrilling because it was forbidden. This hunger for thrill, excitement, and fulfillment carried on through his young adult life. He began an affair with a woman when he was 19 that lasted for 15 years. His life was marked by a pursuit of pleasure. He wanted satisfaction. But despite his best efforts... he never seemed to find it.

That changed when he became friends with a Christian teacher whose influence eventually led him to consider Christianity once again. Opening the Bible he read a section from the book of Romans and the rest... well the rest is history. In his mid-30s Augustine of Hippo was baptized and eventually would go on to be one of the most well-known theologians in the history of Christianity. His autobiography, which was written over 1,600 years ago, is still considered one of the greatest masterpieces of western literature. In the opening of his book, which he called *Confessions*, Augustine summarized the truth about his life that God's Word had finally led him to understand. He wrote:

"[You Lord] have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you." (St. Augustine *Confessions*).

The search for satisfaction is not something that is unique to Augustine of course. Inside each of us there is a desire to fill ourselves with that which brings satisfaction. The sad truth however is that if God is not the one providing satisfaction for us... we will never be satisfied. Let me say that again – If God is not the one providing satisfaction for us... we will never be satisfied.

Are you satisfied?

Did you know that the word "satisfied" comes from the Latin word *satis* which means "enough"? Ironically most people are not satisfied with simply "enough" – we want more than "enough." Having enough to live on, the basics, is better than nothing... but most of us wouldn't consider living in a tent with one pair of clothes all that satisfying. Having a meal of bread and water is enough to fill our belly, but most of us wouldn't say that it really satisfied our hunger. My point is... when we seek satisfaction in any area of our life... we often find that what is "enough" one day, isn't the next... and so we have a restless heart that is never quite satisfied.

God knows this about us. In the sermon text we're considering today we hear God first make an offer and then ask a question: **"Come, all you 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 labor on what does not satisfy?"**

Through his prophet, Isaiah, God was calling out to his people with an invitation. The scene almost reminds you of a marketplace where different vendors are calling out to you as you pass by their shops... Each one trying to sell you on the quality or value of what they have to offer. Imagine yourself in a marketplace like that... but out of the many voices calling out you hear one that rises above the others... and the offer this man makes seems too good to be true: "Come! Buy without money! You don't need to pay anything for what I'm selling. And what I'm giving away freely is better by far than what you would pay top dollar for." That's pretty much what we hear God saying in our sermon text. "Take what I give for free – and be satisfied. Why spend your money on things that will never satisfy you?"

But as I hear that amazing invitation, it is really the final question that gets me... and cuts me to the heart. Because I know how prone I am to not only being dissatisfied all the time... but to trying to purchase satisfaction from places that never deliver on what they offer. Can you relate?

And it's not just our money that we give up in the pursuit of satisfaction... we give up little pieces of ourselves all the time while we try to fill the hunger... quench the thirst inside.

We hunger for acceptance among friends and so we give up a little of our kindness as we join classmates in making fun of someone else.

We hunger for recognition and validation at work so we give up a little of the time we'd normally spend with family or in God's house so that we can get ahead at the office.

We thirst for companionship so we give up a little of our body to a boyfriend or girlfriend hoping that it will make them happy... make them love you more.

We thirst for pleasure so we give up a little of our purity as we watch online an unending assortment of people giving us forbidden pleasures with just the click of a mouse or a tap on a smartphone.

We desire financial security so we give up our days toiling for money and worrying about how to invest it.

We desire physical health so we give up our bodies and our bank accounts to those who tell us we can live longer and feel better if we just follow their simple plan.

And maybe you notice... some of the things we desire are sinful in and of themselves. There is just no place for them in our lives. And the sinful pleasure they offer never delivers on what our heart is truly seeking. But then there are also things that we desire which are not sinful in and of themselves. Some of them might even be good gifts from God... food, family, health, wealth... But problems can spring up there too...

You think of the people in the Gospel today who were fed by Jesus miraculously. They had a physical hunger fulfilled. This was a good gift from God. But do you know what this led the people to do? Give thanks to the Giver of every good gift? See in this gift of food a small reflection of the greater gift of grace that came through Jesus and the forgiveness he came to win? No... it led the people to turn the food into an idol. They ate and were full, and so they wanted to make Jesus a king by force actually... so that he could continue to fill their mouths with free food. **(John 6:15; 26).**

And we're not all that different a lot of the time with the gifts God gives. But if we value the good gifts of God more than the Giver himself, all we end up doing is turning those things into idols... But an idol can never satisfy what our souls truly crave.

And so when we try to feed our hunger with things of this life or the lies of Satan instead of finding our total satisfaction in God and trusting totally in him to give us all we need... we will always go hungry. And if we try to purchase our satisfaction we find that we never have what it takes to buy what we need to be fulfilled. And we also don't have what it takes to buy back our

broken souls when we sell them into sin. We don't have what it takes. But our God does... and not only does he have it but he offers it to us freely.

And this free gift of spiritual food and drink he offers truly will satisfy us... and it's not an illusion, it's not too good to be true. It is ours. It's ours because of the free gift God gave to buy our souls back from death and hell. The gift of his Son Jesus Christ. The one who faced the same temptations in regards to hunger and desire in this life as us... but never gave into to the devil's lies in order that he could be the Savior we needed. When Satan came calling to a starving Jesus, Christ told him: **"Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord."** (Matthew 4:4). When Satan promised Jesus power and glory apart from the cross, Jesus rebuked his enemy and pressed on toward Calvary. When family mocked him, friends betrayed him, when even his disciples abandoned him... Jesus pressed on. He had everything because he had his Father in heaven. And he knew that for us to have it all too, he would have to go to the cross and lose it all for us. He would feel the heat of God's wrath for sin, and endure the abandonment of his God... so that we would not be lost.

This is what our sermon text describes in its closing verses as it talks about **the everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David**. And Jesus, the ultimate fulfillment of King David, not only upheld that eternal covenant promise through his death and resurrection, but he is also the one who is spoken of here as God's great **witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples**. Christ declares this free gift of mercy and love to all people. And as God declared in our text to his coming Messiah: **"You will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor."**

This is good news. We have sold our souls away to sin in search of satisfaction. But Jesus sold himself over to death and torment to buy us back. And because of his perfect life and innocent sacrifice God vindicated his Son and assured us that his sacrifice counted when he raised him from death. This is the good news which God offers to us as fully satisfying soul food – free of charge! It is God our Savior who fills our deepest desires with his very self. Whether we hunger for acceptance or recognition or companionship or pleasure or health or security – in Christ we have not simply “enough” but more than we could ever ask for or imagine.

And when we stumble and fall and sell out... God does not require a payment plan from us to fix things. Instead he holds out to us a promise... an invitation to taste and see once again just how good he is. To come to him without money and to feast on his Word where you find him assign infinite value to you – no matter how others view you. To come to this place and to feast on his forgiveness – no matter what you've done or failed to do. To come to his Son's table where he fills our hunger and our thirst with the body and blood of Jesus... which assures us that we are forgiven in this moment and which gives us strength to serve and honor him in every moment of our lives. “Come!” God tells you. Come and have your fill again and again. Eat his Word in your homes. Drink his life giving promises deep into your hearts in worship and Bible study. **Listen... and eat what is good... and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.**

And as you do this you'll find that now the other good gifts God gives, even the simple joys of food and drink, all of these will simply remind you of the greatest gift of all. The gift of himself

that he gives you by his grace. The Lord has made us for himself. And our souls are restless, hungry, thirsty... until they find their rest... their satisfaction in him. Are you satisfied? No matter your answer to that question today, God would ask you to simply come once more at his invitation... to taste and see for yourself how good he is. **“Come... listen to me,”** God says, **“that your soul may live.”** Amen.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (Romans 15:13).