

Thank God (Part 3) – Is 56:1-8

Is 56; This is the 3rd and final part of a little mini-series from this passage, titled *Thank God*; B/c – **When it comes to God’s people . . . (Review)**

Your race doesn’t matter (v3a,6-7); Your past doesn’t matter (v3b-5); And . . .

Your class doesn’t matter (v8); That was Part 1

And then, in Part 2, we found that – **What matters is . . .**

Your decision – to join yourself to the Lord (v3a,6a)

A decision to believe, repent, and receive him as Lord of your life; It matters

As does . . .

Your choice – to do what’s right (v1a,2b,4b)

To *keep justice, and do righteousness* as it says in v1

Which means passive living doesn’t cut it in God’s eyes; God wants us to be *proactive*

It’s a choice; And it matters

3rd, was your . . .

Your obedience – to honor the Lord and live his way (v2b,4a,6b)

And a good indicator of it, is your obedience in keeping the Sabbath; Setting aside 1 day every week, where you rest from your work the other 6 days . . .

And gather with other believers for the purpose of worship

It matters, b/c it’s part of honoring the Lord and living his way

And then last, is . . .

Your devotion – to love the Lord and serve him faithfully (4,6)

Even when you don’t feel like it (**Summary**)

Your race, past, and class don’t matter as a child of God, but those things do

➤ Which brings us to Part 3 (**Title Slide**), and the thing that matters most; So follow along w/ me in v1-8, and pay close attention to all the things God says *he* will do

[1] *Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed. [2] Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”*

[3] *Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.”*

[4] *For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, [5] I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.*

[6] *“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—[7] these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”*

[8] *The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*

➤ Over and over again God says – “I will, I will, I will”; Indicating a promise, a blessed assurance; And what could matter more? Certainly not anything we could do; No . . .

What matters is God’s promise . . .

Or in this case, promises; Things that God will do for *us*, having made a decision for him; And continuing to show it through our obedience and devotion; It matters

Starting with his promise . . .

• **To save our souls (v1b)**

Thus says the LORD [v1]: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed.

It’s a promise; It *will* come; God *will* save us

And, roll out his *righteousness* in the process – his holiness, and holy standard of virtue and perfection; *My salvation will come, and my righteousness [will] be revealed.*

Which, for those in Isaiah’s day, meant salvation and deliverance from their exile in

Babylon – their bondage to *slavery* for 70 long years

“Hang on” God’s saying, “relief is coming”

➤ But that’s not the only relief implied here; It wasn’t just about their *physical* bondage, but their *spiritual* as well; And ours too; Like God said in 55:7 . . .

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD [from where? from his slavery to sin], that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” That’s *spiritual* relief

The same spiritual relief he’s been talking about throughout the book

So the salvation that God says will soon come in v1, is *far* more than physical; And it’s *based* on the righteousness of his suffering servant, ch53

The one who was revealed in the fullness of time, and came preaching salvation to *all* men, telling them to repent and believe in the gospel – the good news about himself B/c there’s *no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved* (Acts 4:12); It’s a promise to save us; *Us*

And he’ll do it; No matter *what* our race, or past, or class

➤ Thank God; And thank God it’s something we see and hear and celebrate, *every single baptism* service around here; Including our most recent one; It’s a perfect example . . . That God follows through on his promise to save our souls (**Baptism Video**)

Thank God for that; I’m so encouraged by that; B/c so many people are getting it – that God’s promise to save our souls, matters

If that’s *you*, and you need to be baptized to show it, pick up a packet and turn it in

2nd, is God’s promise . . .

• **To give us joy (v2,7)**

And thank God for *that*, b/c there’s far too many things in life that steal it

And who wants to be a part of something without it? I don’t; There’s enough gloom and doom in this world; And way too much misery that loves company

Not to mention the fact that joy is where strength is found; That’s what Ezra said in Neh 8:10 – *The joy of the Lord is your strength*; It’s a promise

Just like it is here in v2; Where God says – *Blessed is the man who does this*; Or *happy* is the one who keeps justice and does righteousness
And then more explicitly in v7 God says – *These I will bring to my holy mountain . . .*
Referring to those who have made a decision to join themselves to the Lord, and live his way, and serve him faithfully . . .
These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer
It's a promise; A promise to give us *joy*, in God's presence – his *house of prayer*
And in God's kingdom – his *holy mountain*; The realm of his rule and reign

➤ Which we know from John 4, has nothing to do with a *geographical* place (**Jn 4:21,23**)
That's where Jesus said to the woman at the well . . .
Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain [Mt Gerizim, where they were standing] nor in Jerusalem [on Mt Zion] will you worship the Father . . . the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit [regardless of location] and truth [based who God is, not people's imaginations], for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

The place of God's presence, his *house of prayer* as it says in Isaiah; And the realm of his rule and reign, his *holy mountain* – is anywhere his people are
Anywhere he rules and reigns in people's hearts
And *joy* will carry the day; God promises it
I will make them joyful in my house of prayer (2)*****

➤ And you know as well as I, that often comes down to a choice, doesn't it?
As in what you choose to focus on – the things of this world, or the things above; The source of grief, or the source of joy?
Choose joy; And thank God you can
B/c it's available in *spite* of our circumstances, and in the *midst* of our circumstances, and *for* our circumstances – giving us strength when we need it most

3rd, is God's promise . . .

- **To extend our influence (v5)**

That's the idea of v5, where God says – *I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them* [referring to eunuchs, people with a past who live for the Lord] *an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.*

It's a promise to extend our influence, when we devote ourselves to the Lord
Giving us a *permanent* place in his kingdom, and a *legacy* that will never fade

Like some wealthy people try to do, by spending millions of dollars to set up philanthropic trusts and various funds that bear their name; Why?
B/c they want to preserve their memory, and extend their influence
The problem is, with the passing of their generation they're soon forgotten and rarely thought of; At least as people; And sometimes even their organization

But not us; Not with God; Not with our *spiritual* legacy; Not with our connection to the name above *every* name; The one whose kingdom will *never* wane
That extends our influence *well* beyond ourselves; And our *legacy* well beyond our lifetime; It's a promise

➤ The problem is, we get in the way; Most often by falling asleep at the wheel
Or as one guy put it – we succumb to *spiritual narcolepsy* (Brad Powell; Outreach Mag)
And sometimes don't even know it; Just like I don't realize it when I fall asleep on the interstate; But I know the signs; I know when I'm at risk; And that helps me avoid it

So I want to give you **8 Signs of Spiritual Narcolepsy** – in hopes of helping you avoid it in your *life*; Or correct it you're already asleep; The first one is this . . .

1. Jesus is someone you rarely talk about

You've fallen asleep in your walk with Christ, and are diminishing the influence that God intends for your life – if Jesus is someone you rarely talk about
If he's just not that big of a deal anymore; Or the people around you don't have a clue you're a Christian; It's a sign you've fallen asleep

2. Your spiritual life is limited to the weekend

This is *it* for you; You don't open your Bible any other time; You don't pray any other time; You don't worship; You don't think about the Lord; Nothing
It's just in and out, and a bunch of sleep-walking in between

3. You're more talk than walk

You know you've fallen asleep at the wheel, if you *talk* about the things of God, but don't really live them out; If that's you, you're headed for the ditch

4. You haven't changed in a long time

It's impossible to walk with Jesus, and remain just like you've always been
You can't spend time with the God of the universe, and not be changed

5. You're more concerned with your plan than God's

More concerned that he will bless *your* ways, than you are about joining his
And it diminishes the influence he intends for you

6. You no longer ache for those without Christ

Their plight for all eternity no longer bothers you
Just like the cares of life no longer bother you when you're asleep

7. You live for the moment more than the eternal

You're far more concerned about the effect of your choices *today*, than you are about their impact on tomorrow; It's all about the here and now
“Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die;”
You may not believe that, but if that's how you live, you're sleep-walking

8. You don't like thinking about this

It makes you uncomfortable; You don't *like* fighting to stay awake
You don't *like* that holy compulsion from the Lord; Or the conviction of his Spirit
You like your *sleep*, danger or not

If that's you, on any of these (**Summary**) – the worst thing you can do is ignore it, or hit the snooze button; Do whatever it takes to wake up
B/c there's too much at stake to risk otherwise; Including your influence*****
That's the 3rd part of God's promise here

The 4th, is his promise . . .

- **To gather us to himself (v7a,8)**

Which we already saw in v7, where God says – *These I will bring to my holy mountain*

As in, I'll gather them

And in v8 – *The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”*

It's something God did *then*, when he brought the Israelites back from Babylon . . .

It's something he's doing *now*, in rescuing us from the bondage of our sin . . .

And it's something he *will* do, once and for all, when he returns to take us home; He'll gather us to himself

Just like Jesus said in **Jn 14:3**

*In my Father's house are many rooms . . . And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself [gather you], that where I am you may be also. It's a promise, and it matters; B/c it determines our entire eternity******

5th, is God's promise . . .

- **To forgive our sins (v7b)**

And thank God for that; V7b – *their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar* God said

Why? For the purpose of atoning for their sin; As in, wiping it clean; Forgiving them
That's why sacrifices were offered

The problem is, it had to be done over and over again under the Old Covenant, b/c the sacrifices weren't perfect and sufficient (**Heb 10:4**)

For it is impossible [the Bible says] *for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins* [to forgive sins].

(**Heb 10:12,14**) – *But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins* [to forgive them], *he sat down at the right hand of God . . . For by a single offering he has perfected for all time* [forgiven, justified, declared righteous] *those who are being sanctified* [those who are working out their salvation].

It's a promise to forgive our sin once and for all*****

The very thing we remember and celebrate at The Lord's Table; And it matters
God's promise matters, b/c our sin matters

And then last, is God's promise . . .

- **To receive our worship (v7b)**

Come one come all God says in v7 – *for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples*; IOW God will accept the *worship* of *anyone* who puts their faith/trust in him

That's the idea of his *house*, being called a *house of prayer*; It's an all-encompassing phrase for *worship*

B/c the practice of gathering at the temple was never just to pray; It was to sing, and sacrifice, and learn as well; All facets, of *worship* (**Summary**)

Which God receives, when we join ourselves to him, and do what's right, and love his name; It's a promise