

“Come, buy without money!” Isaiah 55:1-5

“Come, everyone who thirsts,

come to the waters;

and he who has no money,

come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,

and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,

and delight yourselves in rich food.

Incline your ear, and come to me;

hear, that your soul may live;

and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

my steadfast, sure love for David.

Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples,

a leader and commander for the peoples.

Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know,

and a nation that did not know you shall run to you,

because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel,

for he has glorified you.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Spiritual hunger and spiritual thirst. That will be the focus of our today's meditation.

The Word of our Lord which we just heard has come to us through the mouth and hand of Isaiah the prophet, first uttered more than two and half millennia ago.

Initially this message was addressed to Israelites in Babylonian exile, in captivity far, far from their homeland. But we can say with certainty that this message applies to us as much as it applied to the Israelites millennia ago.

How come? Because this message is written to all people who are worn out by spiritual thirst and hunger. We may wonder – and who are those people? We are those people. All fallen human creatures who are separated from their Creator.

But what does this mean? We may be blessed not to suffer from them, but we all know what physical thirst and hunger are. When you are deprived of the essential elements that are crucial for our existence, of water and of bread.

When it happens, that is the only thing we can think about, the only thing where our thoughts wander to, we can't relax and simply enjoy our lives until these basic creaturely needs are satisfied. But what then is this spiritual thirst and hunger?

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You see, we all, each one of you have been created as someone remarkable, to live in a remarkable relationship and to lead a remarkable life with a remarkable purpose. But our sinfulness has ruined it.

Our sin has separated us from the very source of all spiritual blessings; it has thrown us into a permanent state of spiritual hunger and thirst. The sad thing is, that many of us, perhaps, we could even say that the vast majority of human beings don't recognize this spiritual thirst and hunger for what they are. I will give you an illustration.

What do we think we need to be happy and to live fulfilled lives? We don't even need to guess. There is a research company in the US, called Barna Group, and one of their recent research projects was focusing exactly on this question.

They interviewed thousands of young adults, and these are the answers they received. If only I could buy a home, get married, follow my dreams, start my own business, travel the world, be financially independent, then... then...

There is this emptiness in us, there are those deep longings, those young adults sense that something of great significance is missing. But... they think they know the answers to what they truly need, and what will satisfy their hearts. That's why that list.

As you can see, usually we think that it is something in this world... that dream job, that wonderful house, that impressive achievement, that lovely person, that success, that new thing, that amazing experience, that intense pleasure... When I will get it, then I will be happy and at peace.

I imagine we can relate to what they said. Who hasn't believed that obtaining or achieving these things or having certain experiences or pleasures will make us happy?! I kind of still believe that some of them may just deliver... But less with every year.

So, we chase them. Fiercely. As Isaiah put it, we spend our money on them. It is not only money that we spend; we spend our time, and efforts, and energy, we often make huge sacrifices to get there, because we genuinely believe that they will deliver what we long for in our hearts, that they will satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst.

Most of what we chase are good things on their own. But they all are material things. They all, we could say, belong to the created world. But material things, parts of this creation can't possibly satisfy our deep spiritual yearnings.

That is how our sinful condition manifests, but that is not how we usually think about sin. It is revealed in our incredible foolishness, when we believe that we know better: "Stop pushing your living water on us, we want salt, that will help against our thirst!"

What we truly long for, what we are designed and created to have – is to be very special beings, to be significant, to be valued and appreciated, to be accepted and

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loved, to have meaningful, purposeful and joyful lives, to be at peace and feel secure as we face our uncertain future. This is what we all long for deep, deep in our hearts.

These are not material things. And no created thing, no worldly experience or success, or pleasure can ever fully satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst. So, we spend our lives chasing them, working for them, paying for them, and especially those, who have achieved much more than most of us ever will, they often recognize what the wise king Solomon has put so well: "Vanity, at the end it is all vanity."

As the famous Hollywood comedian Jim Carrey said in his interview to The Ottawa Citizen: "I think everybody should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed of so they can see that it's not the answer [to the longings of our hearts]."

In this our condition the Holy Spirit speaks to us. **"Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."** Our God offers without money, without toil and drudgery, without sacrifice what we all truly need.

But how does He give these things to us? Here is the answer: **"Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear and come to me; hear, that your soul may live."**

He gives them to us by... speaking, and we receive them by... listening. That simple! And it really does make sense! How do you know that you are somebody? How do you know that you are significant? That you are loved and accepted? How do we know all these things? Yes, and you know the answer...

When someone tells you these things. That's how we know it. And then, the more important, the more influential the person who tells it to you, the more what we hear changes our lives. It is one thing when friends or colleagues say it, it is something different when a parent or someone in positions of authority says it to you.

But in this case the speaking is done by the highest authority that there is, it is the Triune God, your Creator and Redeemer who speaks. And as He speaks, He speaks new and beautiful reality into your life. He speaks and reveals: "I have created you in my own Image and likeness so that you could participate in my work of creation."

"I have designed and created you for exceptional tasks and remarkable missions, for multiple deeply meaningful vocations and responsibilities, yes, I did! And I want you to know that you are infinitely precious in my eyes, so precious and significant that my dearly beloved Son, Jesus the Christ, He did not spare His life but gave it up for you."

"I am your God, I am your Father who is in Heaven, and I have prepared for you a new life once this one is over, I will keep you and protect you and will be with you as long as you shall live, and then I will take you to be with me, you will see, trust me!"

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He wants you to hear this: **“Listen, listen, incline your ear, that your soul may live and your spiritual thirst and hunger are satisfied!”** But the Holy Spirit doesn’t stop there. He goes on to remind that we are also included in the covenant that God made with His beloved servant, the king David.

Remember what God Yahweh promised to David? That He will establish a kingdom for David’s son, and that His kingdom will last forever. We know that Solomon was David’s heir, and that already after his death his kingdom was divided in two parts, and then a few centuries later destroyed fully. It was another son of David, to whom these promises applied. His name was Jesus from Nazareth.

It was this Kingdom, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, that was established to last forever. And you know what, – in your baptism you were made heirs of this Kingdom and co-heirs with Jesus, the true Son of your Father in heaven.

This is the kingdom that continues to grow day by day. Every day new and new brothers and sisters are freed from under the power of Satan and brought into the kingdom of Jesus, God’s Son. And when this age is over, when you have finished your race, you will receive your prize that is already prepared for you.

You will see our God and our Lord Jesus Christ face to face, you will be made like Him, and you will also reign with Him forever. That is where your spiritual hunger and thirst will be satisfied forever, where all your empty spaces filled until they overflow, and all the deep longings of your hearts will find their completion, and there, in the presence of Your God you will live in everlasting blessedness.

That is what your God has prepared for you. Come and drink, come and eat, so that your soul may live! Now, how could we repay such grace and such great gifts, how could we express our gratitude to the One who gives us everything, even His life?

Isaiah explains it elsewhere. The Triune God has made us His witnesses. What does a witness do? They tell about what they have seen and heard and experienced. This is what we are to do. We are to proclaim what the Triune God has done for us, and what He now offers to everyone, whoever is willing to receive His bountiful gifts.

Put it simply, we are here to help everyone, whom our Father has placed in our lives, to understand what drives us and our lives, what we all hunger and thirst for in the depth of our hearts, and to point to the only Person in the entire Universe, who can satisfy this hunger and take away this thirst forever. His name is Jesus.

Come and buy without money!

Come and your soul will live!

Amen.