



27 FEBRUARY 2018

## LISTEN SO THAT YOU MAY LIVE

**Isaiah 55:1** *“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. 3 Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. 5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, 11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. 12 For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”*

This is a fabulous passage of hope and comfort. It contains familiar words that people of faith return to over and over again. These words originated during the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem in 586BC. They are words intended to bring comfort to frightened, disoriented, displaced people in exile: *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters... listen, so that you may live... For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace.* These words reassure people that they are not abandoned, but will discover that the ways of God are good: *For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.*

God then answers their prayers through the Persian king Cyrus the Great. In 539BC he conquered Babylon, and by 515BC the exiles begin returning to Jerusalem. God's purposes have been fulfilled: *“so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it”*

As have many people before us - we too can appropriate these words for our lives. The God who carried the faithful through the tough times of Isaiah, is the same God who will carry us through our own 'experiences of exile'. The God who guided the faithful home to Judah is the God who ensures that we do not get lost in a 'foreign land'. And at the ending of our lives we will be guided safely home,

where the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

### **For Thought**

<i>You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills will break forth before you; there'll be shouts of joy, and all the trees of the field will clap, will clap their hands!</i>	<i>And all the trees of the field will clap their hands, the trees of the field will clap their hands, the trees of the field will clap their hands while you go out with joy.</i>
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Composer: Stuart Dauermann (1975)

### **The Third Sunday in Lent**

#### **Thirsting for God**

*The Scripture passage for the day is drawn from Reuben Job and Norman Shawchuck, A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and other Servants, (Nashville, The Upper Room 1983), 118.*

*This reflection is from my own devotional exercises for the day.*