

- I. **Isaiah 55:3** – ³ 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.
- II. **Maybe you have heard of the “Marshmallow Test”**
 - a. Some years ago, researchers studied little kids by putting a marshmallow in front of them.
 - i. They were told that if they didn’t eat the marshmallow yet, then they would get another one when the adult came back into the room.
 - ii. It’s interesting to watch the children and their level of self-control and delayed gratification.
 - iii. Many of the children ate the marshmallow even though waiting was a better deal.
 - b. In January of this year, researchers went back to this test, only they added a twist... a friend.
 - i. “In this new version, kids were paired up, played a game together, and then were sent to a room and given a cookie with the promise of another if they could wait for it by not eating the first cookie. However, some of the kids were put in what researchers called an ‘interdependent’ situation in which they were told they would only get the second cookie if both they and their partner could wait and refrain from eating. The results showed that the kids who were depending on each other waited for the second cookie significantly more often.” ¹
 1. Staff, “Marshmallow test’ redux: Children show better self-control when they depend on each other” *ScienceDaily.com* (1-14-20); Rebecca Koomen, Sebastian Grueneisen, Esther Herrmann. “Children Delay Gratification for Cooperative Ends,” *Psychological Science* (2020)
 - ii. The results seem to show that having someone else with us helps to keep us on track versus struggling with temptation by ourselves.
 - c. In many ways, our lives are a series of choices and decisions that either ruin our appetite or prepare us for the heavenly banquet.
 - i. What happens when you have a big dinner planned at say, 6pm, but at 4pm you eat some chips, drink a soda, and have some pie?
 1. At 6pm, you look at this wonderful dinner in front of you and it looks very unappetizing!
 - ii. What happens when you wait?
 1. The dinner smells and tastes delicious! It’s incredibly satisfying.
 - d. All the way through life, we fall for the first marshmallow rather than waiting for the riches and the feast to come.
- III. **Isaiah is a prophet who sees the fruit of self-gratification** ...and it’s rotten.
 - a. It’s been awhile since we’ve had the Old Testament history lesson, so you need a little background to put Isaiah in context.
 - b. We won’t go too far back, but remember that David was the greatest king and a man after God’s own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22)
 - c. Following David was his son, Solomon, who ruled the Kingdom of Israel as a world power until his death.

- i. But Solomon fell for the marshmallow and after he died the kingdom was divided into north (known as Israel) and the south (known as Judah, and where the temple was located)
- ii. Now, about 150 years after the split, Isaiah is in Judah, the southern kingdom, and he prophesies that the north, Israel, will be conquered by the Assyrians.
 - 1. Not only would the north fall, but Judah and the temple would barely escape the Assyrians.
- iii. And yet, even though they were saved that time, Isaiah isn't done... He also prophesies that in the future the Babylonians would destroy Judah and the temple – They were not off the hook
- d. So all of the earthly blessings that God gave to His people in the Promised Land – the land of milk and honey (Exodus 3:17) – were destroyed in the span of about 150 years.
- e. All this trouble came with kings who had all the power in the world, but lacked the power of self-control.

IV. **Like those kings and so many others**, we also place our trust in creation.

- a. How many times do we dive into the sweets and ruin our dinner?
- b. Just take a quick inventory of your life and remember all the times you lacked the self-control to say “no”
 - i. “No” to the temptations to sin against God or against your neighbor
 - ii. “No” to the thing that will harm you
 - iii. “No” to traps of the devil and his lies
- c. Think of all the ways that God takes care of us... He gives us everything we could possibly need – and most of the time all we could even want –
 - i. As Jesus feeds the 5000 – free of charge – rather than trust in Him, which was the point, they wanted to make Him their earthly king so they could have free bread at the snap of His fingers! (John 6:15)
 - ii. They focused on the gift, creation – rather than the Giver & Creator.
- d. Our world is full of gifts... full of shiny objects that take our eyes off Jesus and take us away from His love and care.
 - i. The problem is that that we are like moths drawn to a flame – the very thing that God intends for good... can destroy us.
 - ii. And even though the things that are here and now seem so important, they are not eternal... they are not going to give us true happiness... and they hold no real value...
 - iii. In fact, Psalm 119:37 says, “[Lord,] turn my eyes from worthless things, and give me life through Your Word.” (NLT)

V. **What does Isaiah 55:3 say to us?**

- a. “Incline your ear, and come to Me; hear, that your soul may live”
 - i. In other words, God says, “Listen to Me! Hear My Word for your salvation... for life that never ends.”
- b. God's Word is absolutely critical in our times of temptation and trusting in the gifts of creation over the Creator Himself.

- c. God's Word is our lifeline that keeps us centered – that keeps us focused on the most important thing – Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Cor 2:2)
- d. You see, long ago, the Lord God promised King David... He said, "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-13)
- e. Even after all God's people turned from Him and ran after worthless things, His steadfast love endured forever... and He made good on His promise.
- f. On the house of David, God promised a Savior – and Jesus came to pay for every single time we didn't say "no" to the temptations to sin.
- g. His work of fulfilling God's promises was not about being an earthly king like all the others who failed, but a heavenly "King of kings" whose reign will never end and whose benefits will never run out.
- h. And by His Word – which is how we receive all the benefits of this King of kings by the way – His Word brings together people from every nation and race for a great banquet – that's on the house.
 - i. It's on the house of David, or the steadfast love and promise of God to send a Savior and King in the Messiah, Jesus Christ...
 - ii. But even more than that, it's free... because Jesus paid for it by His blood and sacrifice

- VI. **As we believe in Jesus Christ**, we will partake in the heavenly banquet... the glory of eternal life and paradise with our God.
- a. Remember the marshmallow experiment? It's easier with a friend.
 - b. God has placed others in our lives to walk along with us, to help us to hear His Word and to be accountable.
 - c. It's the blessing of our Christian family and the people who are a part of this "steadfast love" that our Lord calls us into...
 - d. We hold one another up in the midst of all the troubles, trials and temptations as together we incline our ears to God's Word.
 - e. Remember your Christian friends... remember the steadfast love of God who keeps His promises... and
 - i. Remember that nothing in this world can measure up to the gift of eternal life and the banquet that's "on the house." Amen.