

September 20, 2020

Isaiah 55:6-9

“Seek the Lord!”

Pilgrim Lutheran Church
2155 North Oakland Ave.
Decatur, Illinois 62526

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am assuming that all of us here are familiar with the game hide-and-seek. Different versions of the game are played around the world. Still, if there happens to be someone who is unfamiliar with the game, the general gist of it is that someone hides and others seek to find the person hiding.

As I was preparing for the message today, I came across a devotion of which I would like to share a portion with you. The writer says that it was her father who introduced her to the game hide-and-seek, but with different rules. She writes:

When Dad hid, he would leave clues on purpose so I could find him. Sometimes, I would spy his wiggling toes sticking out from under the living room curtains. Other times, I noticed a lampshade sitting atop a very large stand in the shape of his body. Or I'd hear noises coming from behind the couch. For my dad and me, the game was not about staying hidden. It was about developing our relationship. Our reunion brought joy and laughter. Mostly, it taught me that whenever I needed my dad, he could always be found.

Those words got me thinking. God plays hide and seek with us. **“Seek the Lord!”** our text says. And God plays the game in a very similar way to the father of the author I just quoted. His “wiggling toes sticking out from under the living room curtains” are everywhere. We see the Lord’s toes.

It says in Acts 14:16-17, “In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” Even more startling are the words spoken to the Greeks in Athens (Acts 17:26-27):

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being;” as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”

Yes. God makes “noises from behind the couch” as we are told in Scripture. And he gave his Scripture concerning death and life to the people of Israel, and put them in a narrow strip of land where nations would travel through. Nations were present on the day of Pentecost hearing the Word of God in their own language, the good news concerning Jesus and the cross. Like rain going from one land to the next he has showered down his Holy Word by sending apostles and missionaries. In our land today we are swimming in Bibles. In the whole New Testament age we have the means of grace by which he is with us always.

There is much more that we could say about this. I have yet to say anything about Psalm 19 or Romans chapter 1 or the incredible history that has been recorded for us in the Bible. That requires way more time than what we presently have. The point that we can make is that there isn't any excuse

whatsoever for not finding the true God. The problem is not with God but always with us. But for now, I want to move on to the next point, which is the heart of our message.

The author of the devotion said that the game of hide-and-seek “is about developing a relationship.” This is profoundly true, perhaps more than she realizes, when we consider that God has been playing the game of hide-and-seek with humanity from the very beginning. At its core, hide-and-seek is about a journey, a destination, and finally getting there. This was built into the creation. It was God’s design to communicate to us new creatures that he is pleased to have us as his forever companions. He teaches us a great deal through seeking. He teaches us what we need to know.

The church father Gregory of Nyssa asks: “Do you want to know the opportune time to seek the Lord? The simple answer is: all your life.” Yes. And please allow me to add: “all your life” until you finally get there. The ticking of time, from one moment to another, teaches us many things as we reflect on the many moments that are to find another moment that is greater than the last. The movement from point A to point B is all designed to teach us about God, where we are in relation to him, what he wants, his destiny for us, and for us to cry out that we want that destination too. And just like every destination when you get there, time and movement is no longer worth considering because you have arrived.

God has had in mind for those who believe in him a great moment where he will take off all his covering to reveal himself to us as he is, so that we will be so permeated and penetrated by his glory that we will be like him and an appropriate spouse to forever live in absolute love that knows no fading or ceasing. This our first parents and all who came from them were to seek in the eating from the tree of life. But here we find ourselves as rebellious and fallen creatures who face death, which ultimately points us to an afterlife that is far away from what was originally intended. Still, God has embraced this as an opportunity to show the full extent of his love by sending his everything - his one and only Son who gave up everything - to become one of us in order to rescue us by suffering our sufferings and dying our death on a cross that we may trust him by the Holy Spirit who gives his everything that we may still reach the destination that was ordained from the foundation of the world.

We are to take heart! Though we find ourselves in a rebellious and fallen world, God speaks to us and lays before us bits and pieces of what our final destination will be. We see it in our lesson for this morning. After our text we read (Is. 55:12-13): “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Going out in joy and being led forth in peace and all things making a name for the Lord, which is love in everyone, is just the place where we want to be. It is no wonder then that our text for today so powerfully states (Is. 55:6-9):

“Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens

are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

When you know what the Lord has in mind, it is hard to imagine doing anything in this life other than seeking him! When he gives us a glimpse of his ways, you begin to wonder - who would want to miss out on all that he has planned? The thoughts and ways of the Lord are simply beyond us. Still, he has revealed so much about his very thoughts and ways. And just consider the revelation of his deep desire to have us with him in a bliss that is inexpressible. He desires it so intensely that he, who made the universe, embraces the cross for you and me. He has compassion and pardons all of our sins. Death and hell are overcome. It really is amazing. As Luther writes: “The thoughts of God are far above all our thoughts. In our heart we would never have gotten the idea of a free forgiveness of sins. Reason does not admit that righteousness is free without all merits.”

But it is free. He gives it. He gives himself. He gives all that can be given. May God grant us strength by his Holy Spirit to avoid everyone and anything that might somehow take away the gift he so graciously gives. May it be that our own rebellious ways do not nullify faith and forgiveness, thereby taking us away from the forever land he has promised. And, because there is the constant daily danger that we might act corruptly and do evil in the sight of the Lord our God, we pray that he would keep us in repentance (always seeking) so that we do not utterly perish. And if, for any reason we cease to seek him, may he move us to seek him again. He desires to be found, and he is merciful and will not leave or destroy or forget the promise that he has made in his Holy Word. In the words of one author:

The great obstacle to seeking the Lord is pride. “In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him” (Psalm 10:4) ... The great promise to those who seek the Lord is that he will be found. “If you seek him, he will be found by you” (1 Chronicles 28:9). And when he is found, there is great reward. “Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). God himself is our greatest reward. And when we have him, we have everything. Therefore, “Seek the Lord and his strength; seek his presence continually!” (Psalm 105:4).

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott

<https://proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2012/10/15/hide-and-seek>
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-it-mean-to-seek-the-lord>