

Shoppers like to find a good bargain, or make a good deal. It makes us feel good to be able to stretch the dollars we have by finding a bargain on the things that we really need. That is one reason why we see “Back to School” ads. It is also why grocery stores advertise good prices on the staples which we all need every day. They want to get us into their stores for their good deals, figuring we will also purchase other things as well as long as we are in their store. In the Word of God before us this morning, the Lord is speaking through His prophet Isaiah and tells us that JESUS HAS A DEAL FOR YOU. He says that 1) We could labor hard for things that will not really satisfy, or 2) we could receive the richest fare for our souls.

We are living in an age where it seems that both husband and wife need to work in order for the family to survive — to help put food on the table and a roof over their heads. Many times it seems that just one income is not enough. So both labor hard in order to provide for themselves and their family the basic necessities of this life. But the simple desires we have are never satisfied once for all. Each day we get hungry and thirsty over and over again, so we have to labor hard to continue to put food and drink on the table. Then we hear about all of the reasons why the food we need keeps going up in price during this pandemic. This means that we will have to work even harder to provide those necessities of life.

But it seems that no matter how hard we work to get ahead in life, even with both husband and wife working, we never quite seem to get ahead of the game. There is always something more that we would like. And many times, when we labor long and hard to gain something from this life, once we get it, it does not satisfy us quite like we thought it might. And then there is also something more that we need. Last summer, we had the big project of resealing our parking lot and repairing the front sidewalk and driveway in front of the garage. This year we have replaced the carpet in the fellowship room. As great as it is to have those projects completed, there still are other things which need to be done here at church. It works the same way in our homes. Once we gain one thing, then we find out that we need or desire even more. That is why the Lord, through Isaiah asks, “**Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?**” (2)

What the Lord means is that we need to beware that we look to the correct place to find true, lasting satisfaction in life. If we labor hard just for the earthly necessities and for earthly pleasures, we will never be satisfied for long. Something new will always be coming along. Something better will always catch our eye. Once we achieve a certain level of satisfaction with what we have, then we start to become dissatisfied, because we are going to want even more from this life. That is why Jesus tells us not to love the “*world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*” (1 John 2:15)

The possessions and the pleasures of this world may be very alluring, but they are not lasting. They soon fade and we desire something more, something better. Look at how car companies keep adding features to their new models. I know you remember when you had to crank your windows up and down — and when that was your air conditioning. We now also have power locks, remote keys, and so on. Why do they keep adding new features? So that people will want these new things and trade up to their new models. It is a part of our human nature to want more, or new things after we become accustomed to what we already have. So we need to watch out that we do not focus our attention only upon the things of this world, for this world does not offer us true bread or lasting satisfaction.

Instead of looking to ourselves to provide our most important need, Jesus wants us to look away from ourself and look to Him, Who can give us everything that truly satisfies. In order to state this in a way that will really catch people’s attention, He calls out to us like a barker on the fair mid-way: “**Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.**” (1) Wouldn’t we love to have a grocer that says that to us. What we wouldn’t be able to save on grocery bills! But Jesus is not talking about earthly food. What He wants each one of us to realize is that He is speaking of food that will nourish our souls and

bring us to eternal life. Jesus is offering us food that truly satisfies. After church, we used to have doughnuts or cookies before we went home. But even after eating them, you would also want to have your noon meal, followed later by your evening meal, with snacks in between. Earthly food does not satisfy for long. But when Jesus offers us food for our souls, that will nourish our souls for an eternity.

This He offers us freely — without cost to us. Human tendency is to want to buy, or earn, the things we acquire. But Jesus offers it to us in a different way. **“Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live.”** (3) The food He offers is His Word. We are to listen to what He has to say to us. That is why we desire to come to His house to have our souls nourished from that Word each week. He reminds us that what He is offering to us without cost, cost Him a great deal. He knew our sins, and He knew the result of our sins. But instead of us suffering our own punishment which we well deserve, He took our sins upon Himself and paid for them with His own holy, precious blood. What cost Him dearly, He offers to us freely. As we sit quietly in church, listening to His life-giving Word, we may begin to think of the thousands of other things which we have to do in our daily lives. But Jesus says that the most important thing for us is not what we do, but to listen to His Word, and receive from Him all that He has done for us. It is only through that proclamation of this Word that He works in our hearts.

Without money and without cost Jesus offers us nourishment for our souls that will last an eternity. He offers us forgiveness of sins, life and salvation which is found in His holy Word. Truly His Word is the food that will satisfy our souls throughout eternity. That is why He calls to us to listen, and freely to receive His gifts won for us.

When Jesus suffered and died on the cross to atone for all of our sins, He truly wanted all people to benefit from His work. So it is not up to any of us to labor hard in order to win God’s favor and blessings, for He desires to give them to each one of us freely, without money and without cost. It is a gift of His love given to us. Whatever we labor hard for in this life will not give us lasting satisfaction. But if we listen and receive the gifts offered freely to us, we will be granted eternal satisfaction, blessings without number for an eternity. We have His unfulfilling promise on that.

So talk about a deal for you. Jesus does not just offer to stretch your hard earned dollars, He offers to give you all of His blessings as a free gift. So let us remember to keep our priorities straight. We put so much time and effort into providing earthly blessings for ourselves and our families, but those blessings do not satisfy or last. What truly is important is to listen to Jesus’ word of promise, for in it He is offering perfect and eternal blessings, and they come as a free gift of His love. May each one of us recognize what it is He is offering to us, and then show our appreciation of that gift as we recognize that it is an eternal blessing.