



## Everlasting

### Prayer:

Dear God we adore you and give thanks for the ways you have blessed our lives. Thank you for being a promise keeper and a covenant maker. Please help us to live faithfully as covenant people. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen

### Connect to God:

Where have you seen God at work in your life this week?

### Connect to Neighbor:

What good have you done for someone else this week?

### Connect to Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9 (CEB)

*55 All of you who are thirsty, come to the water!*

*Whoever has no money, come, buy food and eat!*

*Without money, at no cost, buy wine and milk!*

*<sup>2</sup> Why spend money for what isn't food, and your earnings for what doesn't satisfy?*

*Listen carefully to me and eat what is good;*

*enjoy the richest of feasts.*

*<sup>3</sup> Listen and come to me;*

*listen, and you will live.*

*I will make an everlasting covenant with you,*

*my faithful loyalty to David.*

*<sup>4</sup> Look, I made him a witness to the peoples,*

*a prince and commander of peoples.*

*<sup>5</sup> Look, you will call a nation you don't know, a nation you don't know will run to you because of the Lord your God,*

*the holy one of Israel, who has*

*glorified you.*

*<sup>6</sup> Seek the Lord when he can still be found;*

*call him while he is yet near.*

*<sup>7</sup> Let the wicked abandon their ways and the sinful their schemes.*

*Let them return to the Lord so that he may have mercy on them,*

*to our God, because he is generous with forgiveness.*

*<sup>8</sup> My plans aren't your plans, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.*

*<sup>9</sup> Just as the heavens are higher than the*

*earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways,  
and my plans than your plans.*

### **Connect Text in Context:**

The people of Israel are returning home from exile. The people have lived in captivity and God is aware of their cravings. The people's captivity had separated them from many of the things that they desired. The Lord invites them to a feast. The feast will satisfy their cravings both spiritually and physically. The feast is representative of the covenant that God made with David. God's covenant with David still stands. God will not break his covenant. Even though the promises of the covenant were delayed during their exile. The promises of the covenant were not denied.

### **Connect to Practice:**

One's perception of the world can become distorted by craving. Cravings narrow attention such that current desire, thoughts, and urges are be given extra weight, whereas future goals or plans seem less consequential. The danger is that we become so spiritually near-sighted that we lose sight of our future goal, which is becoming entirely sanctified.

God's covenant grants us access to that which our souls crave: peace, joy, hope, assurance that we are children of God, mercy, and grace. These are benefits of salvation. As covenant people of God, we

have access to the grace of God that transforms our lives so that we grow in grace which enables us to love and live like Jesus.

The people of Israel were returning to the promised land but God wanted those who had gone astray to return to him. Perhaps, you have been nearsighted and focused on your cravings not your savior. Don't make your primary goal to attain things that are temporary. The salvation of the Lord has it's benefits in the here and now and the here after. You may be wondering what to do next. Every now and then we need a detox. We change our diet, change what we consume, change our environment. For those of us who are fasting during lent. We let go of those unhealthy habits and fill our time and our lives with more of God. I confess that I have been totally consumed with watching the news for the past month. Every hour I check websites to check that status of things in Ukraine. Rather than consuming the news reports. I needed to pray for the people.

Returning to the Lord is reflected in how we live otherwise fasting is just an empty practice. Likewise, our words of confession our meaningless if they lack the corresponding action of turning away from sin. Covenant living means keeping God commandments, in summary it is to love God, love ourselves, and love our neighbors.

God's grace is available to all. There is nothing that you have done that makes you undesirable to God. God will forgive.

**Connect Heads:**

Define the word “fast” in your own words.

Define the word “repentance” in your own words.

Is there an expiration date on God’s covenant?

Is there a particular insight that you would like to share from the sermon, from the scripture, or from the small group curriculum?

**Connect Heart:**

Share a time when your cravings caused you lose sight of what is important. What did you learn about God? Yourself? Others?

Are there any unforgiveable sins?

Share a time when you used a spiritual discipline to help your grow in your love of God and neighbor.

Who you most identify with in the scripture? The people of Israel or the prophet? Why?

**Connect Hands:**

Did you cause harm in word or deed to someone this week? (self-examination). If so, confess your sin to God, then seek to reconcile with your brother or sister.

Share your prayer concerns and celebrations.

Ask a member of the group to pray for the concerns and give thanks for the celebrations.

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## Notes Sections

**Prayer Concerns:**

**Celebrations:**

### **Daily Reflection Questions**

Where have I seen God at work in my life today?

What is one thing that I am thankful for?

What is one thing that broke my heart today?

What is one good thing did I do for someone else today?