

## Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

### Title: It Is Not Free!

### Lesson: Isaiah 55:1-9

<sup>1</sup> "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. <sup>2</sup> Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. <sup>3</sup> Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. <sup>4</sup> See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. <sup>5</sup> Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor." <sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near. <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. <sup>8</sup> "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. <sup>9</sup> "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

**(Slide 1)** Friends, do you like free stuff? One of the expressions often used in advertisements to emphasize how cheap their products or services are is "Free." I used to like free things. And honestly, I don't think I dislike them even now. But my experiences with free stuff haven't always been great. For example, I've gone somewhere because an ad promised something free, only to find out it wasn't actually free—or if it was, the quality was so low, or it had some problem or defect. As these disappointing experiences with free things piled up, I didn't exactly start hating them, but I began to get suspicious whenever I heard the word "free." Sometimes I hesitate to accept free products or services because of that doubt.

**(Slide 2)** In Korea, there's a humorous saying about this kind of wariness toward free things: "If you like free stuff, you'll go bald." There's a story behind this expression—its truth isn't certain, but let me share it briefly. Long ago, there was a barbershop that offered free haircuts. Word spread, and lots of people went to get their hair cut there. But because the barber was cutting so many heads, he couldn't keep his tools clean. Bacteria grew on the equipment, and since he overlooked this and kept offering the service, everyone who got a haircut there ended up losing their hair due to the

infection. So in Korea, when people want to caution others about free things, they say, “If you like free stuff, you’ll go bald.”

I looked for similar expressions in English, but I couldn’t find one with the exact same meaning. Instead, I came across this: “Easy come, easy go.”

When you experience the “free” that’s used as a marketing trick, you naturally come to realizations like these: “There’s no such thing as cheap and good in this world.” Or, “If it’s cheap, there’s a reason for it.”

I’m not sure if it’s because of these experiences—and not everyone feels this way—but sometimes people seem to misunderstand God’s grace and salvation, which we neither pay for nor could ever afford, because of their experiences with free things. For instance, we might take God’s grace, forgiveness, and salvation for granted, or not consider them important, or even prioritize and value other things over God.

**(Slide 3)** Let’s look at Isaiah 55:1: “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.” When I read this verse, it felt a little strange to me. God is telling us, who are hungry and have no money, to come, buy, and eat. In our minds, buying wine or milk requires money, but God says to buy them “without money and without cost.” Does that make sense to you right away? It wasn’t easy for me to understand, because for us, paying a price when we buy something feels natural, and we don’t have much experience buying things without money.

Here’s another thing that’s hard to understand: God doesn’t say the wine and milk are free. He keeps telling us to “buy” them—just without money and without cost. And it’s not like the wine and milk God offers us are low quality or anything like that. On the contrary, they were of the highest quality—something so precious that not just anyone could have them. Yet God tells us to come and buy them without Him taking any payment from us.

**(Slide 4)** One misunderstanding we can easily fall into is that because we receive these things from God without paying for them, we tend to think of the wine and milk as free. But if we think about it just a little, we can see they’re not free. Imagine a parent giving their child a birthday gift. From the child’s perspective, they receive it without paying anything, but the parent

can give that gift because they've already paid for it. So, even though the child doesn't pay, the parent has already covered the cost. Friends, is that gift free, or has it already been paid for? It's been paid for—by the parent.

I think God's grace, forgiveness, and salvation are similar. Since we receive them as gifts from God, we don't know exactly how much they cost. And even if we did know, we wouldn't have the ability to pay for them. We can receive them because God has already paid the price on our behalf—not because they're simply free.

The saying “there's no such thing as cheap and good in this world” is true to some extent. But God's grace and salvation seem to be the only exception to that rule. We don't pay money to receive God's gift, and sometimes that makes it feel free or even taken for granted. But in reality, it's something incredibly valuable that God paid for through His Son—it's the best thing in the world. The reason we can receive this gift from God without money is because He already paid the steep price of His Son's life for it.

God says He loves us and calls us His children, but as people who could never repay this debt to God, the attitude we should have isn't to take His grace for granted. Instead, we should rejoice in the gift He's given us, receive it with gratitude, and respond with lives that reflect that grace. Some of us might not yet fully feel the weight of God's gift. But I believe there will come a day when we all realize the preciousness of this great gift and feel gratitude for it.

**(Slide 5)** Let's imagine a scenario. Suppose you went on a trip to Europe for your wedding anniversary or a special occasion. Where would you like to go? Let's say you traveled to southern France to celebrate. There's a beautiful city there called Nice, where you can feel the beauty of the Mediterranean. One unique thing about Nice's beach is that it's made of naturally formed pebbles. To make your anniversary special, you booked a luxurious restaurant in Nice with a stunning view of the Mediterranean. You wanted to order something lavish for once, so you got Mediterranean lobster, oysters, caviar, truffles, expensive cheeses, and rosé wine. You enjoyed delicious food while watching the Mediterranean sunset—it was a beautiful time. After soaking in the joy, you made eye contact with the waiter, and they brought you the bill. But

when you went to pay, you couldn't find your wallet—no matter how much you searched your pockets or bag. You were in big trouble.

If you were traveling in the U.S., there might've been other ways to cover the cost. But overseas, it's not so easy. So you started looking through your belongings for anything valuable—your watch, your clothes, even your underwear. You laid out everything that might have some worth in front of the restaurant, but it still wasn't nearly enough. As you sat there, unable to do anything, on the verge of tears, a gentleman stepped in and paid the bill for you. How would you feel? What would you think of that gentleman? You'd be overjoyed, grateful, and you'd see him as a noble person. You'd want to deepen your relationship with him and grow closer to him.

That gentleman is Jesus Christ. He paid the greatest cost in life that we could never cover ourselves. Why God sacrificed Jesus Christ on our behalf is something we can't fully understand, because God's thoughts and ways are completely different from ours. But because God loved us so much, He paid the price of His Son's life to cover the bill that was placed on us.

One of the saddest moments in life is when others don't recognize the heart you put into something—like when you carefully prepare a gift for someone, but it doesn't mean much to them or they take it for granted. I hope none of us make God feel that way. I hope we don't cause God to feel saddened by us. My prayer is that we all cherish the gift God has given us, hold it with gratitude, and use this precious season of Lent as an opportunity to draw closer to God, grow more intimate with Him, and move forward in response to His love and grace. Amen.