

# Lesson 6 | January 10, 2021

## God's Compassion for All People

**Study Text:** Isaiah 54:1 through 55:13



**Central Truth:** God is full of love and compassion for all people.

### **Key Verse: Isaiah 55:1**

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (KJV).

“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” (NIV).

### **Learning Objectives**

- Understand that God's invitation to receive His mercy and pardon has been issued to all people.
- Respond to His invitation in such a way that includes daily obedience and spiritual growth.
- Identify specific people who need to be reached with the gospel.

## **Introducing the Lesson**

**Say:** God's plan to include not just the Children of Israel but all of humanity in His plan of salvation is clear in the Book of Isaiah. While the first hearers of Isaiah's message were the people of Judah, it is evident from today's study that the message is for all people and for all times. The invitation in Isaiah 55:1, our key verse, is an oft-quoted passage showing God's compassion and provision for all who will come to Him.

### **Opening Activity—God's Provision**

*Ask: From your life or from the testimony of someone you know, what examples can you share of taking a step of faith in obedience to God, believing that He would follow through with increased provision and blessing? What was the outcome?*

Allow a few students to share. If you have a story from your own life, you may want to share it to start the discussion.

**Say: God has great plans for people, if they will trust and follow Him. God's plan for the people of Judah was far beyond anything they could see or understand, especially amid difficult circumstances.** (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Although having children is greatly valued today, in ancient Israel, having (or not having) children greatly impacted your standing and well-being in society. **At key points in the Old Testament, God intervened in the plight of a barren wife and brought about a birth of historic significance (consider the stories of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah).** The sons born in these situations all played key roles in the larger history of God's people. **Repeatedly, God used a divinely orchestrated human birth to carry forward His plan to provide spiritual rebirth.**

## **Part 1—God's Everlasting Mercy and Kindness**

### **Rejoice in God's Blessings**

Isaiah 54:1–2

**[Isa 54:1-2 KJV] 1 Sing, O barren, thou [that] didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou [that] didst not travail with child: for more [are] the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD. 2 Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes;**

**Say:** Living by faith sometimes calls for actions that do not seem logical. **When God told the barren woman to sing and rejoice, it would not seem logical based on the values of the day. Neither did it seem logical to tell her to enlarge her tent.** If she was barren, why would she need more space? **But God is not limited to the logical.** He was using this as an illustration of His great plans for His people. Although they would go into bondage, He would bring them back and make their influence larger than ever before. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**In Isaiah's day, a barren woman would have been pitied. And so, the depiction of an enlarged tent in contrast to a barren woman, in Isaiah 54:1–2, would speak clearly to the future blessings of God that were being promised. The prophet invited the readers to make these alterations on their "tent" in faithful anticipation of what God would do.** Think how often, in our walk of faith, God invites us to find hope in expectation of His blessings to come.

**Isaiah 54:1 invites a song in the midst of barrenness. When we look beyond the historical context of God's people facing judgment and exile into a distant, foreign land, this gives a compelling picture of the experience of the redeemed. In ourselves, we live barren lives, an emptiness powerfully expressed through the imagery of a barren womb. Yet because of God's saving work in us, we can become fruitful and contribute to bringing new life into the world.**

**God not only transforms our lives through the work of Christ, but He leads us in communicating the gospel to others and inviting them into relationship with Him. We should expect to see others brought into the Kingdom as we obey the leading of the Holy Spirit and proclaim the gospel. In this way, the "tent" in which we dwell is enlarged.**

#### ***Discuss***

? What cultural expressions in Isaiah 54:1–2 would have special meaning to Isaiah's original audience?

? How can believers today relate to the image of a barren woman?

## Rejoice in God's Promises

Isaiah 54:3–10

**[Isa 54:3-10 KJV] 3 For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. 4 Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. 5 For thy Maker [is] thine husband; the LORD of hosts [is] his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. 6 For the LORD hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. 7 For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. 8 In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer. 9 For this [is as] the waters of Noah unto me: for [as] I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. 10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.**

**Say: The promises of God are sure, but His timing and plan may differ from our expectations.** When the people of Judah were instructed to expand their tent, they could have perceived that they were going to become a great nation right away. However, there would be a time of exile, followed by a return to their homeland, where they would be ruled by the Roman Empire centuries later. **Even when the Messiah came, the fulfillment of the promise did not match their expectations.** His closest disciples wondered when Jesus would set up His earthly kingdom. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**The call to expand one's tent precedes the promise that the people of God will multiply and spread throughout the nations (see 55:5).** On one level, Isaiah 54:2–3 offers the promise of renewed growth and expansion of the people of Jerusalem following their exile. **But the verse also has a beautiful allusion to the growth and expansion of the Church.** When the next verses are considered, the promises God offers to His people can be seen in the context of the New Testament Church.

Verse 4 promises freedom from fear, shame, and disgrace. For the Christian, these most clearly connect with freedom from the effects of sins. **God our Creator is also called our husband (verse 5), a word picture similar to John's vision in Revelation of the Church as the bride of Christ (see Revelation 21:2).** This relationship is only possible through Christ's identity as our Redeemer, a role He fulfills thanks to the measureless power He possesses as "the God of all the earth" (Isaiah 54:5, NIV).

Much of Judah's history is summarized in verses 6–8, including events Isaiah prophesied. Following centuries of idolatry and rebellion, **God's people would be driven from their homeland to endure exile in the lands of their conquerors. But God would call them back, renewing His covenant**

presence among them after allowing them to suffer the consequences of their actions. His divine anger would be felt for a season.

For the Christian, a wonderful promise emerges in the contrasting time elements of these verses. **God does judge sin, but He desires to do so for only a season. His redemptive goal is to transform sinful lives so that they can be brought into His presence for eternity. The references to God’s judgment of a “moment” in verses 7–8 sits next to the promise of God’s everlasting kindness and compassion.**

Verses 9–10 offer historic and even apocalyptic (end-time) promises of God’s unfailing love. But **within these large-scale pictures of His commitment, the Christian can rest in personal assurance of God’s mercy.**

### **Resource Packet Item 1: The Timeless Promises of God**

Distribute the work sheet and give students a few minutes to answer the questions. The first four questions can be answered in small groups, but the final question should be prayerfully answered individually, either during class or at home.

#### ***Discuss***

? What similarities do you see between Isaiah’s original audience and Christians today?

? What can we learn about the nature of God and His attitude toward humanity, in Isaiah 54:3–10?

## **Part 2—God’s Promise to His People Jerusalem Will Be Restored**

Isaiah 54:11–15

**[Isa 54:11-15 KJV] 11 O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, [and] not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. 12 And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. 13 And all thy children [shall be] taught of the LORD; and great [shall be] the peace of thy children. 14 In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. 15 Behold, they shall surely gather together, [but] not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.**

**Say:** When God promised the restoration of the city of Jerusalem, He was speaking both in a physical and a spiritual sense. The city would be restored after the exile that would come upon them. But, beyond that, the city would be restored in a spiritual sense as the New Jerusalem “coming down out of heaven” (Revelation 3:12; 21:2, NIV). This promise applies to every believer of all time. We will be part of that New Jerusalem. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**Woven throughout Isaiah’s prophecies are references to Jerusalem and Zion. The names refer to the same city, and that city has held a central role in God’s redemptive work in human history from the earliest references in Abraham’s day to the prophesied conclusion of this**

**world's history in Revelation (see Genesis 14; Revelation 21–22).** The references in Isaiah 54:11–12 to a city built of precious stones foretells the description of the New Jerusalem within the new heavens and earth (see Revelation 21:15–21).

But even when Scripture directs attention toward the city of Jerusalem, the purpose of those references is to reinforce the truths concerning God's actions on behalf of His people. **Idealistic pictures of Jerusalem are never just about foundations of precious stones, or any other structural detail. God's redemptive actions are ultimately aimed at its inhabitants. Verse 13 speaks of the descendants of the righteous being "taught by the Lord" (NIV). His wisdom and knowledge among them will be a source of great peace. As a current application within this promise for the future, Christians who live according to God's wisdom experience His peace.**

**One day the city of Jerusalem will be impervious to attack, as described in verses 14–15. Until God's people reach this great city of hope, God promises the power of the Spirit to resist temptation and find freedom from fear. Opposition to the gospel and the Church will continue to be realities until Christ returns. But His followers can live in joyful hope of their ultimate victory even as they trust Him to carry them through the trials and challenges of today.**

### ***Discuss***

? What might the descriptions of Jerusalem adorned with precious stones tell us about God's promises for us?

? What causes fear in your life today, and how can you find relief and deliverance from that fear?

## **No Enemy Will Prevail**

Isaiah 54:16–17

**[Isa 54:16-17 KJV] 16 Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. 17 No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue [that] shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This [is] the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness [is] of me, saith the LORD.**

**Say: God is the Creator of all things, including even the enemy of our souls, who chose to rebel against Him.** However, God promises His servants victory over the enemy. His people will "refute every tongue that accuses you" (Isaiah 54:17, NIV). In Revelation 12:10, we read, "The accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down" (NIV). What a blessing to know that, in due time, the enemy of our souls will be destroyed. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**Speaking through the prophet, God proclaimed a deep mystery about His own power, one with which His followers have grappled through the ages. In Isaiah 54:16, God describes himself as the One who gives the blacksmith the ability to forge weapons. He is also the Creator of the destroyer. Then, in verse 17, God promised protection for His people from those evil forces.**

Throughout Scripture, we see two principles restated: **God is the Creator of everything, but God is not the author of evil.** There are many instances in both the Old and New Testaments when physical weapons caused injury and death to godly people. But woven throughout that narrative, God's plan of redemption carried forward. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, **Christians have the promise of victory over Satan's attempts to destroy them spiritually. Ultimately, Christ's followers will witness His eternal victory over Satan.**

A key word in verse 17 is very helpful in evaluating the long-term nature of this promise of protection. Isaiah speaks of the "heritage of the servants of the Lord" (NIV). God promises great blessings for His faithful servants, yet these are only partially realized in this world. **Contrary to the claims of some, the Christian cannot guarantee personal wealth and health and a trouble-free life by repeating certain Bible verses. The believer's heritage, however, gives ample promise that blessings will be revealed and fulfilled over the course of God's eternal plan.**

### **Resource Packet Item 2: Ultimate Victory**

Distribute the case study sheet from *your Adult Resource Packet*. Divide your class into small groups and assign one of the three case studies to each group. After a few minutes ask each group to report their answers. As you gather their responses, write them on the board for everyone to consider.

#### **Discuss**

? How can followers of God maintain faith and hope even when God's promises seem far away in the future?

? What challenging circumstances do you face? What biblical promises can you apply to those situations now? What promises give you hope for God's blessing beyond those challenges?

## **Part 3—God's Invitation to the Nations**

### **Seek the Lord**

Isaiah 55:1–9

**[Isa 55:1-9 KJV] 1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Wherefore do ye spend money for [that which is] not bread? and your labour for [that which] satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye [that which is] good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. 3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, [even] the sure mercies of David. 4 Behold, I have given him [for] a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. 5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation [that] thou knowest not, and nations [that] knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. 6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your**

**ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.**

**Say: God's plans are far above any human plans we can make.** While the people of Judah were looking at their current situation, God was looking far beyond it. He was going to use them to reach the nations. How would He do that? Through accepting the Messiah, who would come from the lineage of Judah, all of humanity could be reconciled to Him. Each one of us is included in these verses. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

**In Isaiah 55, God issued a wonderful invitation resting on two powerful truths outlined in verse 1 and expanded upon in the verses following: First, this was a universal invitation to all people; and, second, God called on all to receive blessings, which will be received by God's grace, not because of human merit or ability.**

Verse 2 asked a rhetorical question of Isaiah's audience: **Why would anyone rely on their own limited resources to obtain flawed and limited benefits? There would be no need for the question if God had already determined whom He would bless and whom He would condemn. But the people would have the freedom to turn to God in response to His invitation, or ignore Him and continue their futile search for fulfillment and meaning in life. Such an invitation continues today.**

God's plan for our lives immeasurably surpasses anything we might accomplish for ourselves. Our souls can "delight in the richest of fare" (verse 2, NIV) and experience true life (verse 3). That these promises ultimately have their foundation in Christ becomes clear when Isaiah prophesies of their eternal nature (the "everlasting covenant") and their Davidic identity. **While Isaiah's audience could look back on the splendor of David's reign, the Christian can also see that Jesus, David's descendant, is truly the One who is a witness to the peoples of the world (verse 4).** Verse 5 again points to the global scope of God's redemptive plan and the obedient witness of His followers that will speak to the nations.

Verses 6–9 remind God's people, including believers today, that **our sin separates us from God and there is a limited season in this life during which we can accept God's offer of salvation (see 2 Corinthians 6:2). Those who respond in faith during the time of opportunity must turn from sin—in their actions, their thoughts, and their motivations. When they do so, they discover that God freely offers mercy and pardon. The immeasurable gulf between God's exalted nature and our lowly, sin-flawed existence can be bridged, but only through the bridge of salvation God has provided.**

[2Co 6:2 KJV] 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now [is] the accepted time; behold, now [is] the day of salvation.)

### **Discuss**

? How does Isaiah 55:1–9 acknowledge that people must choose to accept or to reject God's invitation?

? To what degree did you resist God's invitation to salvation before accepting Christ? Why do you think you resisted Him?

## Respond to His Word

Isaiah 55:10–13

**[Isa 55:10-13 KJV] 10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it. 12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap [their] hands. 13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign [that] shall not be cut off.**

**Say:** God’s Word produces results. Just as rain and snow fall down from heaven to water the earth and produce crops, so the power of God’s Word accomplishes its purpose. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The concept of “the Word” is often referenced in Scripture. **As a result of God simply speaking His Word, this universe came into existence.** Throughout history God has continued to speak with divine power to shape human lives collectively and individually. His written Word guides all who will both read and apply its truth. **And the living Word, the Messiah Jesus Christ, is the fulfillment of the great written promises concerning redemption.** Isaiah extolled the great virtues and significance of God’s Word in Isaiah 55:10–13. **By His Word, the world was made and functions properly. In a sense, the intricate nature of creation is a constant reminder that we cannot comprehend the ways of the Lord (verses 10–11).**

Word, we learn and follow His purposes. Ultimately, our relationship with Jesus Christ brings to fruition God’s plan for our lives. The result is deep fulfillment and joy, both in this life and the life to come (verses 12–13).

### **Resource Packet Item 3: Divine Seed**

Distribute the group discussion sheet, and divide your class into two sections, with smaller groups within each section to discuss the sheet. After a few minutes, ask some of the groups to report their answers.

#### ***Discuss***

? When you plant a garden, how much credit do you take for what grows? How can you liken this to acknowledging God’s power over our own abilities?

? How does God’s Word shape and guide your life on a daily basis?

## **What Is God Saying to Us?**

**Say:** God has given every believer the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel to the lost. The Church is the means by which He communicates His truth to the nations.



## Living It Out

### Ministry in Action

- Identify areas of your life where you need to grow, and ask God to help you.
- Look for volunteer opportunities in your church or community where you can serve God.
- Pray that God will point you to lost people with whom you can share your faith.

## Daily Bible Readings

### Monday:

God Prevents Sin.

Genesis 20:1–7

[Gen 20:1-7 KJV] 1 And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. 2 And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She [is] my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. 3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou [art but] a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she [is] a man's wife. 4 But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? 5 Said he not unto me, She [is] my sister? and she, even she herself said, He [is] my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. 6 And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her. 7 Now therefore restore the man [his] wife; for he [is] a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore [her] not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that [are] thine.

### Tuesday:

God Blesses Potiphar's Home.

Genesis 39:1–5

[Gen 39:1-5 KJV] 1 And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither. 2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. 3 And his master saw that the LORD [was] with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand. 4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all [that] he had he put into his hand. 5 And it came to pass from the time [that] he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

### Wednesday:

God's Mercy to All.

Psalms 145:8–16

[Psa 145:8-16 KJV] 8 The LORD [is] gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9 The LORD [is] good to all: and his tender mercies [are] over all his works. 10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13 Thy kingdom [is] an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion [endureth] throughout all generations. 14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all [those that be] bowed down. 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. 16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

Thursday:

God's Law Written on the Heart.

Romans 2:12–16

[Rom 2:12-16 KJV] 12 For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 13 (For not the hearers of the law [are] just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and [their] thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Friday:

God Desires All To Be Saved.

1 Timothy 2:1–7

[1Ti 2:1-7 KJV] 1 I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks, be made for all men; 2 For kings, and [for] all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 3 For this [is] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; 4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. 5 For [there is] one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; 6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 7 Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, [and] lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity.

Saturday:

God Establishes Governments.

1 Peter 2:13–21

[1Pe 2:13-21 KJV] 13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 As free, and not using [your] liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. 17 Honour all [men]. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. 18 Servants, [be] subject to [your] masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this [is] thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20 For what glory [is it], if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer [for it], ye take it patiently, this [is] acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: