

**THE GREAT INVITATION**  
**November 6, 2016 morning service**  
**Isaiah 1:18-20**

I'm beginning today a journey and that journey starts in the first of November and will end on Christmas morning of this year and we're going to be in the book of Isaiah through all of these messages. In November and December we'll end up over in the middle of the month of December in that great, great passage of Isaiah 53. We'll be looking at our Lord and prophetic words and then on Christmas morning I'm going to be preaching on "He Will Do It Again." We're all going to gather together for Christmas and we're going to sing about the first coming and I'm going to preach about the second coming. I hope you'll come bring friends and join us on Christmas morning. As you have seen Him go, He will likewise come again. He'll return. Isaiah says so much about our Lord being born of a virgin but he also has much to say about Him coming again. This morning we're going to begin in Isaiah 1 and read verses 18, 19, and 20.

Do you get invitations? I get lots of invitations. I get invited to things verbally but then I get written invitations. I have a written invitation here to the swearing in of some political people that are serving and thank God for them. I have a birthday invitation to come. I have an invitation to a fundraiser. I've got an invitation to a wedding. Before long I'll begin to get those invitations to a high school graduation that nobody wants me to come to but wants me to send something. I get invitations all the time. Don't you? Yeah, we all get them. Thank the Lord for it. I'm grateful for invitations that come my way.

I just gathered up some I had on my desk and they are here but the greatest invitation that the world has ever received is found in the gospel. It is God's great invitations and Isaiah writes about it in Isaiah 1, verse 18 where the old prophet – now Isaiah is a man of a great mind. He is a learned individual. He served in the city. He is not a rural prophet. He is an urban prophet. He was among kings and queens and knew them, some of them we believe related to. Isaiah speaks and he says:

*"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. If you consent and obey, You will eat the best of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You will be devoured by the sword." Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*<sup>1</sup>

"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. Your sin, though it is like scarlet or like crimson, it will be white like wool or snow. Here Isaiah says, "Come, I invite you." God invites you. Come and sit down and think with Him. Reason with Him. There's a sin issue and he likens the sin issue to the color red, scarlet, crimson he uses here. When you read of material being dyed, this color in eighth century before Christ. I read in places where the cloth was double-dipped. It had to be dipped twice to be

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made scarlet. It speaks of our sinfulness. You've been dipped twice. When you were born, you were born in the total depravity of sin. There is none righteous, no not one. None. You came into this world sinful. You were dipped once. And as you grew in your own volition, you chose to sin. You did it. Yes, you were dipped once in depravity. You were dipped twice with your own choice. Your righteousness is like filthy rags. You are scarlet, you are crimson, oh but you can be white as snow and wool.

"Come, come, come now," says the Lord. All through the word of God we find this invitation. In Exodus 32:26 Moses is one of the first. We find that: *Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, come to me!"* [The King James says whoever is on the Lord's side, let him stand over here.] *And all the sons of Levi gathered together to him.* Whoever is on the Lord's side. Whoever is for the Lord. Come stand over here. Jesus said it in Matthew 11:28. This is one of my wife's favorite verses. *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*

When we were coming here over 26 years ago, getting ready to come and talking, my wife was walking through some depression and she had to learn to rest in Christ. She knew weariness. She was heavy-laden in her spirit and had to learn to rest in Christ. Jesus says, "Come." If you're weary, depressed, weighted down. I have a good friend. I went to seminary with him. He's a minister of music in Oklahoma. His name is Harry Laden. We used to call him Heavy. You say, "Why did you call him that?" Because he's heavy laden. He's a burden to carry. We have burdens we carry and they get heavy. Come to Jesus if you're weary and heavy today. He's going to give you rest.

In John's gospel chapter 1, verses 45 and 46, Nathaniel is there. *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."* *Nathanael said to him, [Can anything good come out of Pensacola, Florida?] "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him [What did he say?], "Come and see."* Come. Come and see. Come and look and I will show you the Master. Paul said it in II Corinthians 5:20. We find from his pen: *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.* We appeal to you. We beg you. We urge you. We exhort you. We say, "Come. Come. Come get right with God. Come." And the word of God ends in Revelation 22 with one of the greatest invitations of coming to God that you'll ever know. *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears [today. If you hear the spirit, you hear the pastor, you hear a friend. Let the one who hears] say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.* Let him come.

I'm going to ask some of you in just a minute. I'm about to be done here in a few minutes and when I'm finished with this, I'm going to ask you to get up, to get up. I'm going to ask you to come today. I'm going to ask you to come today. Get up out of your seat and come. Not get up and go out the door. A lot of people do that. I'm not asking you to get up and leave. I'm going to ask you to get up and come. Come. "Come

now,” saith the Lord. “Come and reason together,” saith the Lord. Though your sins be like scarlet be white as snow. I’m going to ask you to come. Get up and come.

Now who in the world is this invitation for? How do you get on an invite list? You know, not everybody gets invited to everything. I’ve had people that get their feelings hurt and say, “You know, they invited them but they didn’t invite me.” Some people get their feelings hurt because they say, “Well they invited me. I don’t want to go.” I believe everyone’s on this list. God’s appealing. God is always calling people. Even when you’re not speaking and I’m not preaching, I’m telling you, the spirit of God is calling. He is so faithful. He is so much more faithful than we are. He is calling people out of darkness and in the light. He is calling us, calling us, calling us.

Three simple things I want you to see with me this morning. Just very quickly out of this text. First of all, the people he calls. Who is it that God is calling? Well in the book of Isaiah this first chapter – you still got your Bible open? Look back at verse number 2, in Isaiah 1 and verse 2. Everybody ought to bring your Bible to church, alright? I mean you’ve got it on an iPad or leather-bound edition or your iPhone or 3CPO or whatever you’ve got it on. Open up your Bible and keep your Bible open. You say, “Well I don’t have one.” There’s one right there in front of you. There’s a black book in the pew rack. There in front of you there’s a blue hymnal. There’s a black Bible. You can open it up and you can find Isaiah 1. It’ll tell you what page it’s on right over in the front in the table of contents. Alright? Well when you read – he said, “Listen to this.” Isaiah 1, verse 2. *Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; For the Lord speaks, “Sons [look at this] I have reared and brought up. [God said, “I’ve got children. I’ve reared them. I brought them up and what did they do?”] But they have revolted against Me.*

Some of you have sons and daughters. You’ve raised them and they’ve revolted. They’ve gone away. That’s who God’s calling. God’s calling those that He raised up and they revolted against Him. Verse 3 says He’s calling the ignorant, the ignorant, those that don’t even know what they’ve done. An Ox knows his owner, a donkey his master, but Israel does not know. My people do not understand. They’re dumb as an ox because they can’t see God.

In verse number 4 He said, “I’m calling those who are weighed down with sin and iniquity.” They’re the offspring of evildoers. They are corrupt. They’ve abandoned me, verse 4 says. They’ve despised God. They’ve turned away from Him. They’ve gone another way. God said, “I’m calling you. I’m calling you.” You’ve gone away but now come home, come home. God’s not tuning you out. He’s saying, “Come home today.” This is a good news God. He’s saying, “Come home. Come home.”

Verse 5. You’re rebellious. We have children who rebel. God has children who rebel and He says, “Come home.” The whole head is sick. The whole heart is faint. In verse number 6 he says from the top of their head to the sole of their foot, nothing is sound in them because they’ve gone away. They’ve got bruises and welts. They’re sick. We often preach against certain sin but let me tell you, rebellious and lost people

just act like rebellious and lost people. We need to invite them to repentance. That's what God is doing in this text.

In verse 7 He says, "Your land is desolate." Yes, Amen. They've gone away to a desolate place. God is calling the rebellious today. If you're in this room and you at one time walked with God but you've walked away from God, come now. Come sit down and talk to Him. Come and reason with God and see if He wouldn't speak. He's calling the rebellious. He's not just calling the rebellious, this text says in verses 13, 14, and 15 He's also calling people with dead religion. Look in verse 13. *Bring your worthless offerings no longer [don't give me your money], Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies—I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly. I hate your new moon festivals.* You come together.

Everybody comes Christmas Eve now. God said, "I'm sick and tired of you showing up and lighting a candle and thinking everything's okay the rest of the year. I'm tired of you coming on a Sunday morning, saying a little prayer, giving a little money, and then walking out and sitting here like a Baptist and going out there and living like a devil." He says, "Come, get right. Come repent."

That that is a stench in the nostrils of our great God is dead religion. He says, "Your new moon festivals, all of these things you do, they've become a burden to me." *I am weary of bearing them.* Verse 15. *So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you.* Even when you make multiple prayers He said, "I'm not listening." Why? Because your hands are covered in blood.

I wonder what that blood is. Sometimes it's the blood of the martyrs. Sometimes it's the blood of the aborted child. Sometimes it's the blood of your hatred to other people. Jesus said, "If you hate it's as if you killed your brother." He said, "Don't come to church and make your prayers with your hands full of blood. I despise that." What God says is, "Come. Come get clean. Come get right. Come wash and be made right." Who's He calling? He's calling rebellious men. He's calling men of dead religion.

Secondly though in this text see the offer God makes. God makes an offer right here in verse 18. "Come now, let us reason together." I've just shared with you about the red and the white and how you can turn. How does that happen? If you consent and obey, verse 19, you will eat of the best of the land. If you refuse and rebel, you'll be devoured by the sword. There are three words here. You need to think, turn, and trust. Think, turn, and trust. Say those three words with me. Think, turn, and trust. Think, turn, and trust.

Here's what God says. Number one. Think. Come, reason together. There are some of you that sit in this room today. You do not believe that the Bible is the word of God, that it's filled with error. Okay, good but at least think about it. Some of you say, "Well, I just don't believe in God." Beloved, let me encourage you. This is why we do apologetics at Olive. Christianity, you don't get to heaven or you don't get to God by

just what you know but some people are missing the fullness because they've never opened their mind and studied. He says, "Come, sit down and reason with me. Think."

When it comes to creation there are just a couple of options, maybe three, that some would say but it's either God or not. I mean there's either a great God of order or there is great chaos and we got this order out of chaos or we get order out of order. To believe that things just exploded and became as orderly as they are takes great faith on somebody's part. There's the great unmoved mover behind us. He made you like you are. He set this world – the Bible says in Job that He made the earth and He hung it on nothing and told it to stay there until He comes to get it. He put the planets in order. He put the stars sprinkled across the heavens. He put the moon in its place. He put the oceans on our planet and told them how far they could go and how far they could not. He is the great God of creation. Now you've got to study, common reason, think, think but you're not finished when you think. You must also turn.

Josh McDowell was that man thinking he was going to disprove that God was God and he ran into God and got saved. Lee Strobel was that way, an attorney. He was going to prove there was not a God and when he got into the proof he found there was a God and he got gloriously saved. He wrote *The Case for Christ, The Case for Faith, The Case for the Bible*. He was a writer for the *Chicago Tribune*. Now if you don't believe in miracles, a lawyer working for the *Chicago Tribune* that didn't believe in God and became an apologist, that's the grace of God. Lee Strobel was changed because he began to think but he then turned. He turned. That's what this text says. Consent and obey. Repent, turn. Don't refuse and disobey but come.

Verses 16 and 17 tells you what to do. *Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.* That's what he says to do. Come and do right. No longer do wrong. Turn, turn, turn.

There are people in this room that need to turn today. You're sitting in this room. I'm inviting you to come and turn. In a few minutes, in just a moment I'm going to give the invitation. There are some of you that watch us by television. There some watching live on live stream. Some are watching on our Facebook live stream today. I'm telling you, you need to come. You need to turn, turn unto God. Cry out. Don't refuse Him. God loves you and He says you to if you'll think and if you'll trust, if you'll trust, God'll save you and forgive you. He'll bring you home and that's what you need to do. If you're at home, do that. If you're sitting in your workplace, do that. If you're driving, be careful. If you're listening by radio. If you're driving, listening on your phone, pull over but get right with God. Cry out.

Think and then turn. I'm not just asking them that are watching from afar. I'm asking you that are close today. When we give this call in just a moment I want you to rise up out of your seat and I want you to come. Come now and trust the Lord. This is the offer that God is making.

Think, turn, but there's a third word. Trust. Look at the last phrase, the last phrase in verse number 20 where the text says this. *Truly, the mouth of the Lord has spoken.* You have to decide if you're going to trust what God says or trust what you think. You say, "Well I believe this. My professor believes that." Let me tell you, there are going to be many a college professor that will stand in the judgment of God and I'm telling you, it will be hell hot for the godless professor that has robbed a young person of faith they've grown up with. They will out of their own godlessness – you say, "Preacher, that's pretty harsh." It's not as harsh as Jesus. Jesus said, "If you cause one of my little ones to stumble it's better for you to have a millstone hung around your neck and be cast into the Mediterranean Sea."

When you walk onto college campuses oftentimes you'll find people that will try to rob you but you don't have to go to college. You'll find it in high school. That's where I first encountered it. I first encountered it in science lab. "Oh you're one of those Baptist boys that believes God did it." A high school teacher will try to embarrass you in front of everybody. Let me tell you, when they do, stand in your chair literally. Get up in your chair and make it a pulpit and when they bring it up, you preach Jesus til the principal comes. I'm telling you, it's time to rise and stand. If they confront you about your faith, rise. Don't be a fool. Don't be arrogant. Don't go looking for punishment but if it comes your way, let it come. Let it come. Just let them know. He or she brought it up. I didn't start this. They did. You say, "Well I don't know as much as they do." No, you don't. You know more than they do because you know God and they don't. You say, "Preacher, I'll get embarrassed." That'll be fine. I'd rather go to heaven embarrassed in front of a teacher than be embarrassed in front of my King. Trust. If God said it, stand on it.

I've shared this with you before. I wouldn't dare do it because my mother's still alive. I've seen Dr. Criswell do it. He'd throw his Bible down and then he'd get up on top of it and he'd stand there. He'd say, "Stand on the book." I shared that one time. My mother told me, she said, "Don't you ever do that." She said, "You preach the Bible but don't be standing on no Bible." I said, "Yes, ma'am." But at her funeral.... As soon as I say that, she'll probably preach mine. That's the way it'll go. She'll testify.

Friend, you've got to trust. If God has said it, that's the offer God makes. He's making this offer to think and turn and trust. Come. Come, let us reason together. It's the people God calls, the sinner, the rebellious, the dead religion. Come to the offer God makes. "If you'll come, I'll forgive and I'll make your life like wool and white as snow."

There's a third thing I want you to see and that is the time God sets. The time God sets. Notice what He said here in verse 18. Come. What's that next word? Now. Come now. Come now. You cannot come yesterday. You cannot step toward God tomorrow. You will only come now. We are in the 500<sup>th</sup> year. We're in 499 plus. We're moving toward the 500<sup>th</sup> year of the Protestant Reformation when Martin Luther nailed those thesis to the door in Wittenberg. He was a monk. He was a priest but he was lost. God did something in him. There was a lightning bolt one night. It didn't scare

him to death, it scared him to life. Luther cried out and he began to read and he saw the Bible said, "The just shall live by faith." At that time Tetzl, they were building in Rome and they were building too much and so they came up with this new way of raising money called indulgences. The church would say you put money into the coffer and every time you put money in, somebody pops out of purgatory. That was their fundraiser. They were traveling place to place.

Luther confronted that and said, "No, it's wrong. You don't get out of that by what you give. Christ paid the price. The just shall live not by works but by faith." Luther came to Christ. He accepted the greatest invitation in all the world. God gloriously saved him. Spurgeon. Spurgeon went to church on a snowy morning as a young teenager and he couldn't get down to the Baptist church where they normally went and he turned in because it was a snowy morning. He went to a Methodist church where there were just a little group of people and the pastor of the Methodist church couldn't even get there. A Methodist lay person, a lay preacher in a Methodist church got up and shared the gospel and God spoke to Charles Haddon Spurgeon's heart and God saved him that morning without a preacher. The Sunday School teacher became the preacher. The word of God became the word of God. The gospel became the gospel and the Spirit of God drew that young man and he came to faith in Christ.

When we get to heaven one day somebody will say, "Look at everything Spurgeon did." No, no, no. They're going to say, "Look what some Methodist person did when they were faithful to the gospel that touched a man who touched the world."

Spurgeon believed now. That day. That day. When he preached this text, and I've read his sermon on this text, Spurgeon says, "Come now." Don't delay. Come now. Today's the day. If you're in rebellion against God, come today. If you've walked away from God, walk back to God and do it today. You say, "Preacher, I don't understand everything." God didn't say understand it all. He said come reason with Him. Think with Him. Cry out to Him and I'm telling you, God will change your life. Cry out unto the Father. The time God sets is now. Friend, you've got to do it now.

I don't sense in my heart that God is saying through me today that today's the last time someone sits in this room that they'll ever hear the gospel but it could be. Someone may sit here for the last time. I don't know. You may never have another opportunity. You may have a thousand. All I know is that the Bible says today is the day and now is the time and you need to trust God now. Today. Not tomorrow. You need to do it now. Come now. Out of that balcony, you need to come now. There are people in this room today that need to come now. You need to decide now. Today's the day and now's the hour. Some of you say, "When should I come?" You do it now. You don't even know what time it is today anyway. Is it 12:00? Is it 11:00? Is it 1:00? We don't know. We're all confused. I'll get home today and there'll be clocks over my house that have got different hours on them. I've changed some. I'll change others when I get home. Some of them change themselves.

Now. Now. One of our men, it was Chris, spoke to a lady this week about her faith. She said, "I'm a cradle Catholic." I didn't even have to ask him what that meant. I'd never heard that phrase before. What that means is that they were baptized as an infant and said they'd never had anything else to do with the church but they were a cradle Catholic. That's when they started. I said, "My goodness. We've got those." I said, "I can literate it too." They've got cradle Catholics. We've got bassinet Baptists. We've got manger Methodists. You see, their momma and daddy brought them when they were a little bitty baby and that's all they've ever known. Come now. Now. The time God sets is today. Today's the day of salvation.

Some of you are here today and you need to decide and come home to God and you need to come home now. Some of you need to join this church and join it now. Somebody's here today that needs to be saved and need to be saved now. Somebody's here and been baptized. You need to come make a decision to do it now. Now.

Here's what we're going to do. If you're ready to decide for God. If you're ready to decide any of those things or something else and God's calling you and you know, you say, "Pastor, today's my day. I'm supposed to do that." I want you to stand up and I want you to stand up now. Just stand up right there. Just stand up wherever you are. Anybody. Just anybody. In that balcony around. Just standing up. "Today's my day, pastor. I'm coming today. Now, now, now." People are standing up. That's good. Good. Over here. Over there. Anybody else? Just rising, rising. That's it. Amen. Today's your day. Now's the time. Let me tell you friend, if you won't stand in here, you'll never stand out there. We're for you in here. If somebody gives you trouble in here, I'll send three of the meanest deacons we've got to beat the living daylight out of them, alright? I'm just telling you, we're for you. Today's the day.

Here's what I want to do. If you're standing or did stand. Maybe you sat back down. In a moment, Jon's coming right now. When Jon begins to sing, Gary's going right out that door. I want you to go and when we sing this song, I want you to go out that door. It says Exit. Take a left. Some of our people are going to sit there and talk with you and explain to you the way of salvation. If you want to join this church, go by there today. They'll be glad to talk with you. You say, "I've never been baptized." Today. Now's the time. If God's called you to preach, go right out there now. Now. Come when? Now. Now. Come now. Let us reason together says the Lord.