

# The Glory Gap



**“While we are content (even prefer) to gather around our little ingrown campfires of worship and share gospel s’mores with a few good friends, God is summoning nations to gather together at the bountiful buffet of His full mercy and free pardon.”**

If we could measure the distance in miles between God’s storehouse of knowledge and understanding, and our cognitive capacities, what would the number on the odometer read? And just how big of a gap is there between the way God plans, orchestrates and gets stuff done and the way we go about our business? It’s a big gap—an enormous glory gap!

God describes this glory gap as the distance between the terrestrial and the celestial—stretching all the way from our lowly domain and to his limitless dominion, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,” declares the Lord. “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

## He Fills the Distance

These are familiar words to most of us, but consider the context of this grand affirmation and contrast. In Isaiah’s 66-chapter book, chapters 38-55 center on the incomparable Savior and the unimaginable salvation that God promises to lavish on His ill-deserving people. As chapter 55 begins, a bountiful buffet of God’s grace is described and a loud invitation beckons anyone to come and feast, using the currency of their poverty as the only acceptable payment. “Come, all you 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 (Isa.55:1).

This soul-delighting free-for-all-feast of the “richest of fair” (v.2) is one of the clearest demonstrations of the glory gap—of just how gloriously different God’s ways are from ours. We’ve been told all our lives, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch” and so we try our best to pay our way, spending and being spent “on what does not satisfy” (v.2).

## Your Money’s No Good Here

Be honest, how long did you try, and how many vain attempts did you make to purchase a guilt-free relationship with God with the self-righteous tender of religious sincerity, moral promises, spiritual disciplines, and good ol’ trying harder before you finally discovered that Jesus came to live in our place a life of perfect obedience and die in our place upon the cross, “...pierced for our transgressions” and “crushed for our iniquities,” that His punishment would bring us peace (Isaiah 53)?

But Isaiah 55 offers yet another striking demonstration of the measureless disparity between God’s ways and ours. The prophet moves from describing the individual riches we receive in the gospel to describing the global reach of the gospel. Promises made to King David will be completely fulfilled in King Jesus—the Messiah, the Suffering Servant. “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my unfailing kindnesses promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander of the

peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for He has endowed you with splendor” (vv.4-5).

## The Call

While we are content (even prefer) to gather around our little ingrown campfires of worship and share gospel s’mores with a few good friends, God is summoning nations to gather together at the bountiful buffet of his full mercy and free pardon (v.7). God’s people were called to be a light to the nations, but they had become a blight to the community through their unbelief, selfishness, disobedience and pride. But Isaiah sees a day when the matchless splendor of Jesus will be so powerful in the Church that it will serve not merely as an invitation, but far more powerfully, as an international subpoena to God’s goodness!

These are the high thoughts God thinks, and the heavenly ways He loves. How about us and our services of worship? Is the gospel the engine that’s driving our worship, and is the glory of Jesus serving as a subpoena to our neighbors and the nations? Are our thoughts and ways at worship becoming more magnetically missional? Or are we existing as a blight to our communities—maybe big, successful, musically creative and technologically hip, but ingrown self-satisfied blights none the less?

Memories of the nations gathered at the Garden Tomb and visions of Isaiah the prophet leave me redemptively hungry and missionally hopeful for the day when we will “go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before (us), and all the trees of the field will clap their hands” (Isa.55:12). Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly, close the gap, and finish the worship story!