

“A Guaranteed Return!”—Isaiah 55:10-11

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A Guaranteed Return!”, is Isaiah 55:10-11 → *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Despite the belief of many people that there are no guarantees in life it is rather interesting how many of these same people look for guarantees in their life everyday. Who invests money without looking for a financial return? What employer hires someone without expecting the employee to give a good return of work? What newlywed couple gets married without looking for companionship, affection as well as mutual respect and love? What farmer plants seed without expecting it to grow and produce a generous crop?

Interesting how all these people expect a return by some kind of faith, even making life-changing decisions and commitments based on it! Even if we make commitments in all the various vocations we fulfill in life, none

of us can actually give another “a hard core guarantee.” If you are alert you will soon discover that you are not in control of all variables in life to guarantee the expected return.

Amidst the struggles we have making guarantees with our words, God tells His people that His Word will bring forth a return—**guaranteed!** This guarantee is expressed by Yahweh through the prophet Isaiah in our text using a picture from observable laws of nature dealing with plant growth and the water cycle of condensation and evaporation. In verse 10 of our text He speaks of how *the rain and the snow come down from heaven, watering the earth, making it bring forth and sprout plants, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, after which it returns back to the sky (i.e. heaven).* It’s a process we take for granted everyday with great expectations.

We plant in hope and expect growth to take place especially at the sight of rain. While many of us may do so with hobby or vegetable gardens, the farmer stakes his whole life on the expectation of rain. Actually, everyone does. While many may have their lives “invested” in the guarantees for which they look in their jobs, they too are dependent upon the rain for the farmers. The principle is simple: no rain, no groceries. Thus, the picture God uses here is all-inclusive. **Everyone needs rain to survive in life!**

The connection is how God's Word affects people as it is "showered" into their hearts and lives. The LORD simply says in verse 11 → *so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth*. God's Word is like the *rain* which comes *down from heaven*, and just as we expect plant growth to take place, so God expects growth in us as we "soak it up." Moses had used the same picture in his song in Deuteronomy 32:2 → *May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, like gentle rain upon the tender grass, and like showers upon the herb*. The question is: What is happening with God's Word in the "evaporation process?"

It is interesting that Yahweh expects the moisture to *return to heaven*, much as we do as we function in our daily lives (i.e. evaporation). Without a return where is the rain for more growth? Thus, God also expects His Word to *return to Him* according to verse 11 of our text: *So shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it*.

So, what kind of a *return* is that for which the LORD looking? **Faith in Him and His promises**. The devil, the world and your own sinful nature are doing everything within their power to get your to turn from the LORD rather than return to the LORD. All sin leads to idolatry, trusting in people, possessions, power and prestige for guarantees in life. This idolatry was so strong amongst God's people of Isaiah's day that *Isaiah* says, "Lord,

*who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (cf. Romans 10:16-17)*

Isaiah had described the *return* in the previous verses: *Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (cf. Isaiah 55:6-7)* The faith return for which Yahweh is looking comes in the form of humble repentance of your sins to *God, for He will abundantly pardon*. Such absolution also produces a return of gratitude for His forgiveness as well as serving Him by bringing His life-changing Gospel to others!

It is very important to remember that the only ears hearing God’s Word as you share it is sinful ears. The only hearts hearing God’s Word are sinful hearts, much like yours and mine. So anytime God’s Word is shared with someone it will always have some kind of affect on them, eliciting some kind of response or reaction.

Some may initially turn away from the LORD when they hear His Word, rejecting it’s power for their lives in unbelief. Hebrews 4:12 says *the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart*. People don’t like to have their sins exposed. However, rejection is still a reaction, even if it

does lead to hell.

When you initially receive its heart-revealing power and respond in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, you will experience the Holy Spirit guiding you through the written Word of God, not just *to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ*, but also in obedience to it as God's infallible Word. This purpose of God's Word is described in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 → *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

However, the promise of our text is that God's Word *shall not return to Him empty, but it **shall accomplish** that which He purposes, and **shall succeed** in the thing for which He sent it.* In other words, it will always bring a guaranteed result which is life changing! Really? This is hard to believe considering so many reject His Word and will for their lives. How is this possible as we watch our world crumble down around us in moral decay and licentiousness, going from bad to worse daily? Can this really be true as we watch our own children who have been brought up in the church and should no better turn their backs on their baptisms as God's children? Really? God's Word *shall not return to Him empty, but it **shall accomplish** that which He purposes, and **shall succeed** in the thing for which He sent it?*

Years ago I visited a 103 year old bed-ridden woman in the nursing

home who was very sharp mentally. Above her head was a schedule. It informed the nursing home staff when to rotate her in bed so that she didn't develop bed sores. As we began visiting she asked me, "Pastor? Why am I still alive in this condition? What purpose do I have in life now?"

Needless to say, it was a very depressing and valid question—one which plagues most people on a daily basis. After pausing in thought, I asked her if she ever had any visitors? "Sometimes," she replied.

"Are these visits ever with your children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren?"

"Sure. I love to visit especially with my grandchildren!"

Then I asked her, "While simply visiting with those grandchildren, how do you know that you won't say something which will change the rest of their lives and you'll never know it? They may latch on to something you've said which they needed to hear which could re-direct the course of their lives but you may never know it."

While it did present a purpose for her existence it still did not change her situation. However, it did change her perspective of the power of the spoken word!

The promise of our text reassures us that God is in the business of guaranteeing a return on His Word proclaimed by His disciples. It will accomplish His desires whether or not you see those results! The

challenge is for you to trust God's Word to powerfully work in peoples' lives, continue using it and sharing it with others with confidence, leaving the results up to God. He has guaranteed His love for sinners in the blood of Jesus, His Son, shed on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. He has guaranteed that forgiveness of sins to you through the Gospel, baptism, the Lord's Supper and absolution. The guaranteed return comes as you experience the power of the Holy Spirit working in your life, bringing you to the Scriptures daily for guidance, sharing it with others and trusting God to work through it in their lives! **This is God's guarantee!** Amen.

*He Who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food  
will supply and multiply your seed for sowing  
and increase the harvest of your righteousness.*

(2 Corinthians 9:10)

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