

Third Sunday in Lent, March 20, 2022

Text: Isaiah 55:1-9 (New Revised Standard Version)

### A Different Kind of Purchase

This text from Isaiah begins with a broad invitation. For all who are thirsty, there are waters to satisfy. Then God, through the prophet, invites the people of God to do something as profoundly counter cultural now as it was at the writing of these words almost three millennia ago. God invites the people to come, buy and eat, wine, milk, bread, apparently anything desired, at no money and no cost. What store owner do you know who invites people to buy to their heart's content without paying a dime?

But that is precisely the nature of the One who is making this strange invitation, succinctly summarized in this statement: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither my ways your ways." Throughout this passage Isaiah speaks to the ways of God that are often in stark contrast to human ways: ways of mercy, pardon, steadfast love. This Lenten season we see on display human ways of callousness, condemnation, and hatred, manifest in a senseless war in Ukraine, a global pandemic politicized at the expense of global well-being, and the perpetuation of the evil of systemic racism.

Nevertheless, God, faithful to the everlasting covenant promised to David and ratified through Jesus Christ, invites us to buy the richest of fare. And the cost has not risen with inflation. It is still the same. No money. No labor. We can receive all God has to offer – love, joy, and peace, by coming, listening, seeking - turning from our human ways and repenting of the things that keep us spiritually hungry and thirsty. Whenever we do, God promises that we, and the world, will be satisfied.

Prayer: God, may we seek You while You may be found. May we invest all we are and spend all we have with You through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Rev. Freeman L. Palmer serves as Conference Minister for the Central Atlantic Conference United Church of Christ. Originally from Washington DC, Rev. Palmer is a second career minister, attending Seminary after a fifteen-year career as a broadcasting executive with CBS Inc. Rev. Palmer holds a BA in Economics from Swarthmore College, an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Master's in Divinity with Honors from New York Theological Seminary. He lives with his spouse Donal, an ordained ELCA Minister, in Baltimore MD.

A prayer that Rev. Palmer offers daily is Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. May your Good Spirit lead me on level ground (NIV)."

