

Isaiah 55:1-3

Verse 1 All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money come, **receive** grain and eat;

Receive is passive, in the “pray, pay, and obey” mode. The *Nova Vulgata (NV)*¹ uses *properate*, carrying the idea of “get a move on” or “hasten to obtain.”

Verse 1 come, without paying and without **cost**, drink wine and milk!

The NV for **cost** is more about what one brings to the table, in this case, without any *commutatione* or change in one’s situation.

The *King James Version (KJV)*² translates *come, buy wine and milk without money and without price*.

*Douay Rheims*³ translates, *come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price*.

*The Jerusalem Bible*⁴ translates, *Buy corn without money, and eat, and, at no cost, wine and milk*.

¹ [Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita iussu Pauli PP, VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP, II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera](#) (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4

² General Editor, The Reverend Cain Hope Felder, Ph.D., [The Original African Heritage Study Bible: King James Version](#) (Nashville: The James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1993)

³ [The Holy Bible: Translated from the Latin Vulgate with Annotations, References, and an Historical and Chronological Table: The Douay Version of The Old Testament, First published by the English College at Douay, A.D. 1609: The Confraternity Edition of The New Testament: A Revision of the Challoner-Rheims Version Edited by Catholic Scholars under the Patronage of the Episcopal Committee of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine](#) (New York. P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1950).

⁴ Alexander Jones, General Editor, [The Jerusalem Bible: Reader’s Edition](#) (Garden City, New York: Double Day & Company, Inc., 1968).

*The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)*⁵ translates *come, buy wine and milk without money, free!*

Verse 2 Why spend money for what is not **bread**.

Bread here carries a Eucharistic connotation.

Verse 2 your wages for what fails to **satisfy**?

Satisfy is translated in the NV as *saturitate*, a word used again in English in the Psalm, though the NV uses *imples*, or *fill up*, rather than *saturitate*, here in Isaiah. Matthew 13:20 has *they all ate and were satisfied, saturati* in the NV.

Verse 2 you shall delight in rich fare.

The Liturgy puts it mildly. The NV indicates that the very purpose of the eating is to enjoy the rich fare. Rich fare, the NV uses *crassitudine*, in other words, to the point of being *crass*.⁶

Verse 3 I will renew with you the everlasting covenant

The NV does not use the word *renew*, but *shall make*, KJV, Douay Rheims and JB use *will make* NBJ uses *shall make*.

With the above agreement, what the *New American Bible (NAB)*, which is generally used by the liturgists, has becomes significant: *will renew*.

Verse 3 the benefits assured to **David**.

David is the most interesting word in the liturgy.

To begin with Carroll Stuhlmueller:

As seen in the biblical text, God does not revoke promises,
however, nor does God renege on the divine word of an eternal dynasty.
Without any incumbent king, Israel continued to recite the royal Davidic

⁵ Henry Wansbrough, General Editor, *The New Jerusalem Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1985).

⁶ See *Cassell's Latin Dictionary: Latin-English and English-Latin* revised by J. R. V. Marchant, M.A. and Joseph F. Charles, B.A. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1952), page 141.

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psalms, only now they proclaimed converging hopes for a Davidic Messiah in the distant future. Some traditions continued with this loyalty to the Davidic tradition—like the two books of Chronicles and Zachariah 9—12. Still other traditions preferred to ignore the Davidic promises. **Isaiah 55:3-5** returns to the people what had been an “everlasting covenant,” and “sure love for David” (v.3). One is now back again in the days before 1 Sam 8:5 when the people asked for a king like all the nations. In Isaiah 55—66 all hopes are centered in the city of Jerusalem. The apocalyptic visions in Daniel 7—12 recognize no mediators between God and the people; God immediately sets up the glorious, final state of Israel.

The Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time has my previous comments on democracy.⁷ Returning to Stuhlmüller:⁸

In collecting the psalms into five books, the editors saw to it that David was “democratized.” He appears in the titles to the psalms not as king but as a psalm writer and fellow human being. The largest number of psalms are [*sic*] under the patronage of his name. The psalms originally composed for royal rituals (coronation, marriage, anniversaries, special needs) are scattered throughout the five books. One of the most important, Psalm 110, as mentioned already, was almost lost. It was recovered, in tattered shape with textual difficulties, from a long-standing tradition and included the last of the five books of Psalms.

To continue and expand the quotation on democracy from the Fourteenth Sunday:

This use of the phrase [*Hebrew writing*], found elsewhere [besides Psalm 132:8-10 and 2 Chr 6:42] only in **Isa 55:3** appears to be a subtle reassertion of the house of David’s claim to a continuing role of leadership. The statement in 2 Chr 21:7 confirms this; there, the Chronicler changes “Judah” in his source, 2 Kings 8:19, to “the house of

⁷ The source for the Fourteenth Sunday comments is Adrian M. Leske, “Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), pages 676-678.

Footnote #8 seems missing, for an unknown reason. Carroll Stuhlmüller, C.P., The Spirituality of the Psalms (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002) ISBN 0-8146-2599, page 76.

David” and changes “for the sake of David his servant” to “because of the covenant he had made with David.”⁹

Psalm 145:8-9, 15-16, 17-18

Though this is an acrostic psalm, the liturgy leaves out the letters, in this case: Heth, Teth and Ain, Phe, Sade, Coph.¹⁰

Verse 8 **slow to anger**

Longanimus for **slow to anger** was mentioned in the Fourteenth Sunday.

Verse 9 The Lord is **good** to all

The NV has *TETH. Suavis Dominus universes*, in other words *suave* or as Norton of Jackie Gleason fame might put it, *suave faire*.

Verse 15 you give them their **food** in due season

Food refers to the Eucharist.

Verse 16 you...**satisfy** the desire of **every living thing**.

The sense here, **every living thing**, suits the sense of *crass*, mentioned above. For **every living thing**, the NV has *omne animal*, so *every animal desire*.

Verse 18 to all who call upon him in **truth**.

In **truth** as distinct from in what is politically correct.

Romans 8:35, 37-39

⁹ Adrian M. Leske, “Context and Meaning of Zechariah 9:9,” the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 62, No. 4 (October 2000), pages 668.

¹⁰ Nova Vulgata: Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Sacrosancti Oecumenici Concilii Vaticani II ratione habita iussu Pauli PP. VI Recognita Auctoritate Joannis Pauli PP. II Promulgata Editio Typica Altera (00120 Citta Del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979, 1986, 1998) ISBN 88-2209-2163-4.

Romans 8:18-39 is one of the “bookends of grace” already mentioned in the Eleventh and Seventeenth Sundays. Not mentioned is the development of Christian identity, as follows:

Ultimately, what Paul is doing with νόμος [law] in Romans has to do with identity—the identity or self-understanding of the inclusive community of believers becoming, through the power of the Spirit, the eschatological people of God. In Galatians, Paul deals with νόμος because of a problem in Galatia, Law as a “law of works.” In Romans, the problem is more at Paul’s end of the communication, so to speak. In preparation for his visit (Rom 15:24, 28-29) he writes to present himself and his gospel to a community that he has not founded, many of whose members may have jaundiced views both of himself and of the gospel which he proclaims. Specifically, the long sequence comprising Rom 9:1—11:36 seems designed to counter a belief that he is indifferent to the fate of his people by birth and is casual or careless about relating his Gentile communities to the identity and heritage of Israel. His task in Romans is to project a vision of identity in which the community formed by the gospel is one that is truly inclusive (therefore, justification by faith: 1:18—4:25), that has a νόμος setting it on the path to life (the νόμος of the Spirit of life: 5:1—**8:39**), and that has not replaced Israel but looks to eventually [*sic*] incorporating within itself the Israel that still stumbles at the gospel of the Crucified (9:1—11:36).

Verse 35 Will anguish, or **distress**, or persecution, or famine...

NV uses *angustia* for **distress**. *Angustia* carries with it a sense of *narrowness*, the frustration that happens when others miss the big picture we see.

Verse 38 nor angels, nor **principalities**

Principalities bothers me. Once angels have been mentioned, why add **principalities**, a rank of angels? One reason may be literary genre. The word itself, however, carries with it the sense of powerful person, so, *political correctness* in this case. Paul goes on:

Verse 38 nor **powers**, nor height, nor depth

Powers seems related to the conflict between truth and politics, again.

Matthew 4:4b

Matthew 14:13-21

Verses 13-19 The **crowds** heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples approached him and said, “This is a deserted place and it is already late; dismiss the **crowds**...” and he [Jesus] ordered the **crowds** to sit on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples who in turn gave them to the **crowds**.

Verse 20

The following scholarly comments simply relate the other Gospels to Matthew with no other purpose in mind.

C. The Feeding of the Five Thousand

In this account there are a number of Matthew—Luke agreements against Mark. These involve:

- (1) **Matt 14:13** and Luke 9:11 specifically mention “**crowds** following him,” whereas Mark 6:33 does not.
- (2) **Matt 14:19** and Luke 9:16 once again mention the “**crowds**” (Matthew) or “**crowd**” (Luke), whereas Mark 6:41 does not.
- (3) **Matt 14:20** and Luke 9:17 refer to the bread “left over,” whereas Mark 6:43 does not. (The doublet in Mark 8:8, however, does have “left over.”)

Neiryneck [F. Neiryneck, a scholar] has argued that the common agreement in **Matt 14:13-14**/Luke 9:10-11 involving the reference to the “**crowds**” is explainable on the basis of an independent reworking of Mark by Matthew and Luke. Whether this is convincing or not, it is interesting to note a parallel in John’s account of the feeding of the five thousand which agrees with Matthew and Luke. In John 6:2, we read of “a great **crowd** following Jesus.” Furthermore John 6:12 and 13 refers to the fragments “left over.” Once again the issue of John’s dependence upon Luke arises at this point. According to Fortuna [Robert Tomson Fortuna, a scholar], the differences that exist in John’s account of the feeding of the five thousand, however, “are not explicable as the result of intentional changes (of Luke) on John’s part,” He further points out that even as the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6:30-44) is not literarily dependent upon the feeding of the four thousand (Mark 8:1-9) but rather on two separate traditions, so it is best to see the Johannine account of the feeding of the five thousand as dependent not on a Synoptic account, from which it diverges considerably, but rather on another tradition of the same account. Is it possible that here again the Matthew—Luke agreements against Mark may be due to their

familiarity with a tradition whose wording they prefer over Mark? John, in 6:12 and 13, by his agreements with Matthew and Luke and the doublet in Mark 8:8, appears to testify to the existence of such a tradition.¹¹

With the same sense of the unusual, note:

What is entirely unique with Matthew is the disciples' coming to Jesus in the indicative [mood] (always aorist). Seven times this pattern appears in Matthew. It appears nowhere else in the NT. Most of the NT occurrences of *proserchomai* outside of Matthew (23/35) as well as most of Matthew's uses (28/51) are participles since what is usually emphasized is not the coming but what someone came to do, e.g., say, ask, or test. Matthew, by using the indicative, often takes the emphasis off what those coming say or do and shifts it forward to what Jesus says or does.¹²

Verse 20 They all **ate**

The animal instincts are at work here, again. The Greek was originally only used for feeding animals, for example with hay. In Hellenistic (i.e. the Greek of the New Testament) Greek the word superseded classical Greek to mean *satisfy*.¹³

Verse 21 Those who **ate**

The grammarian writes:

Just as the aorist or imperfect, where relative anteriority is involved, may correspond to an English pluperfect, so too the participles (aorist, or present standing for an imperfect) may have to be rendered so as to express the relative time which they themselves do not express. The rendering of an aorist participle by "having -ed" is too usual to need exemplification; for the present participle cf. **Matt. 14:21**; 15:38
οι εσθιοντες = "those who had eaten"; Lk 23:49 the women

¹¹ Robert H. Stein, "The Matthew-Luke Agreements Against Mark: Insight from John," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 54, No. 3 (July, 1992), pages 496-497.

¹² Terence J. Keegan, O.P., "Introductory Formulae for Matthean Discourses," the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, Vol. 44, No. 3 (July 1982), page 421.

¹³ Max Zerwick, S.J. and Mary Grosvenor, Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament unabridged, 5th, revised edition (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico 1996), page 47.

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αι συνακολουθουσαι (“who had followed”) Him from Galilee stood by the cross.¹⁴

Other translations for **ate** are: KJV and Douay-Rheims, and NJB *had eaten*, but JB and NAB *ate*.

The *Magnificat* ® quotes the author of *Lord of the Rings*, J. R. R. Tolkien, the inventor of languages such as *Elvish*, of *The Hobbit*, and *Middle-Earth*. Tolkien was an English linguist with an extraordinary interest in Norse languages and myth. Tolkien is known for making things up. See <http://www.daimi.aau.dk/~bouvin/tolkkein/whowastolkein.html>. I have only read enough of his trilogy to be unconvinced that anything he writes tweaks my interest. Perhaps there is an academic explanation. With C.S. Lewis, Tolkien shared interests in “various opinions about Myth, its relation to language, and the importance of Stories.”

I find academic rigor the best tool for me to disabuse myself and others of self-perpetuating misunderstandings, myths, and prejudices. Historical criticism is my locus of academic rigor, where the goal is to dislodge truth from myth and personal insights. Neither Tolkien nor C. S. Lewis share the historian’s insistence of getting the facts correct before proceeding.

Just before I left the seminary in 1959, I finished reading the highly respected C. S. Lewis, *Christian Behavior* (New York: MacMillan Company, New York, 1944). Because of that reading, C. S. Lewis impressed me as a great commotion about nothing, about the same as Tolkien.

I especially do not find the academic rigor out of which flow personal insights in the following Tolkien passages.

Tolkien notes, “every **man’s** heart desires...”¹⁵ Just what Tolkien means is obfuscated by his language. I am not sure if he means human or male desires.

Tolkien writes as if seven times a week is not an interval when he writes *Seven times a week is more nourishing than seven times at intervals*. My point is that there is no

¹⁴ Maximilian Zerwick, S.J., English Edition adapted from the Fourth Latin Edition by Joseph Smith, S.J., *Scripta Pontificii Instituti Biblico—114—Biblical Greek* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1994, page 291.

¹⁵ *From the Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Humphrey Carpenter, Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 215 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10003 as cited in *Magnificat* ® Vol. 4, No. 6 (July 2002), page 69.

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interval in the life of the soul, of grace, of communion (to use his word) with God. The difference is between physical presence, the Eucharist, and that presence that does not rely on the physical, presence through grace.¹⁶

Tolkien notes with elitist, British disdain, “women in trousers and often with hair both unkempt and uncovered.”¹⁷ For some of us appearing that way is neither a sacrifice nor “an exercise.” For some of us, such an appearance is the best we can do and we are proud to do it and to be in the company of those making a similar struggle.

Tolkien describes the feeding of the Five Thousand as a “mess.”¹⁸ If they cleaned up everything, it seems to me that the feeding was anything but a mess. One of Matthew’s themes is “Our Father who art in heaven...thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” about order, not mess.

No doubt, Tolkien was a fervent Catholic. As laudable as fervor may be, fervor unsupported by academic rigor, in other words, by a strict adherence to truth, only leaves me confused, dissembled, and, more often than not, angry.

¹⁶ *From the Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Humphrey Carpenter, Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 215 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10003 as cited in *Magnificat*® Vol. 4, No. 6 (July 2002), page 69.

¹⁷ *From the Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Humphrey Carpenter, Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 215 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10003 as cited in *Magnificat*® Vol. 4, No. 6 (July 2002), pages 69-70.

¹⁸ *From the Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, Humphrey Carpenter, Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, 215 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10003 as cited in *Magnificat*® Vol. 4, No. 6 (July 2002), page 70.