Topic: A Deal You Can't Refuse (Season of Lent 3, Lectionary C)
Scripture: Psalm 63:1-8, Isaiah 55:1-9, 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Hymns: BB410 My Faith Looks Up, vu120 O Jesus I have Promised, vu651 Guide Me, BB202 Amazing Grace

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Let’s take a moment to pray…

Lord, before this world's days even began, your Word was in the beginning, and it was with you and it was you. The mystery of that brings us to our knees. Yet today you allow us to open your Word and know you better. So, we ask that you would give us eyes to see and ears to hear. Give us hearts open to your Spirit as we seek you. AMEN.

(SLIDE) Let's be perfectly honest here... who doesn't love a good deal, eh? Who are my shoppers here? In a particular cartoon I once watched, the husband and wife were sitting in an office negotiating over a time share. If they took the time share, they'd get a free gift to sweeten the deal.

The salesman offers up a free boat if they took the deal. The husband immediately is all in, who wouldn't want a free boat! His wife is a little more sketpical. The salesman changes his tactic and offers the pair a "mystery box". This begins a back and forth with the husband and wife over the potential of the mystery box.

"A boat is a boat," says the husband, "but a mystery box could be ANYTHING. It could even be a boat!" Whether it is a buy-one-get-one sale, a sweet discount on your favourite item at Starbucks, or a mystery box... we are drawn to a good deal, we pulled to things that cost us nothing or less than we think they're worth.

And I'm sure each of us has, at one time or another, been burned by one of those "deals". The mystery box that turned out to be tickets to a sub-par comedy club, and some of those BOGO deals come with fine print that you have to pay the tax on the second item. Oh, and PRIME - Amazon Prime (SLIDE) example is free shipping on Amazon.

You get free shipping if your order on Amazon is over $25... but you can NEVER find another item to get to that free shipping that doesn't make your order $50 or more! You could search for hours, but you'd be stuck paying twice as much for your order just to get free shipping.

So you get Amazon Prime so you always get free shipping on everything no matter the order... but that's like $140 a year... do you spend $140 a year on shipping costs?

But, what if I told you that there IS an offer out there that is truly free and it is better than anything Apple, Amazon, Best Buy... or any Mystery Box could ever give you? (SLIDE of Isa 55:1-2) I give you the Ultimate FREE offer!

"**Come, all you who 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**". Imagine, if you will, walking into the finest steakhouse you know and ordering an A5 Kobe Steak (video SLIDE of steak) made just the way you like. I like my steak medium-rare, with some Montreal Steak spice on it.

Did you know that six ounces of an A5 Kobe Steak will set you back about $400? (SLIDE) I know, in this economy... a $400 steak!? Anyway, the bill you've been dreading comes due. The waitress brings it over and you see a stamp on it that says: PAID. That's what God is offering in Isaiah 55 here - spiritual nourishment, eternal satisfaction, and abundant life for free.

The world tells us nothing is free - it's part of why we like a good deal, because it's true: nothing is free in the world. But God says, "come and see". And the crazy part is that people reject this offer all the time. Even we Christians! We throw up our hands to God's offer and chase after junk food for the soul.

We binge-watch Netflix to busy our minds and avoid the heavy questions that weigh on our souls, we doom-scroll endlessly through TikTok and Instagram trying to cram fleeting joy into every minute because stillness is painful, we pour our very souls in our careers, our relationships, and our success - all in search of meaning yet, we are still starving... still parched... every day.

We refuse God's free offer to our own peril... (PAUSE).
(ASK) Who here has ever hung up on a telemarketer? (JOKE) I see some of you gave up being honest for Lent, eh? ... Yea... I've hung up on them, and I was one for a long time. And you know I'm always trying to skip ads on YouTube or when I'm watching shows on TV. I've deleted those emails that start with "Exclsuive Deal Just For You!". It's easy to tune things out.

But, God is saying (SLIDE of vv3-5) don't tune this out... this is the real deal. "**Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David**".

God is offering an eternal contract - not one of those loosey-goosey cell phone contracts where you pay out the wazoo for something someone made in China for pennies on the dollar... and not a contract backed up by a bank or government that cares for its own self-interests above yours. All of these contracts break down, and break us down into commodities.

God's offer is different, He offers an eternal contract backed up by His good name. It is no scam, not a marketing ploy to get you in so you are always hooked on the system of buying and selling your time and stuff to keep up with the times. God gives us a lifetime guarantee when we say 'yes' to Him. And the contract is ENTIRELY to our benefit.

We come out the winners when the contract is enacted. We get all the rewards, and none of the downside. There's no term limits, there's no hidden fees, there's no 'notwithstanding clause'. It is literally like nothing we will ever know on this planet.

But the sad reality is that we can miss our chance at this amazing deal. Y'all know what Black Friday is, yes? We've probably all heard a story or two about some of the ridiculous pandamonium that it has caused. From people waiting in line for 14 hours, in sub-zero temperatures only to come out with a cart full of $2 towels all the way to people fighting each other because they wanted that specific crock pot...

Black Friday leaves its mark on the world's retail experiences all for the deal, that deep discount. The point is that people will quite literally camp out, trample, and fight each other for a discounted TV. Why?

Because the deal is a limited time only, it has scarcity. We treat earthly sales as more urgent than our eternity, sadly. (SLIDE) "**Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near**". The doors are open, but we must go through them before they close.

(SLY) But Amadeus, a loving God wouldn't do that to His people... right? God does not say this because He wants to shut people out. Lot's of atheists will say that. This verse isn't a description of God's character, it's a warning about the unpredictability of life. You can't schedule an emergency. You don't know what tomorrow may bring.

You have no idea if you'll have another chance to say 'yes' to God. Time is precious in so many ways... one way is that we can never reclaim time that has gone by. Once time is spent, it is spent - no refunds, no rainchecks. And we cannot foresee what comes next and while we are focussed on our TVs and discount cell phones we are missing what will happen to our souls when we die.

And that's because you and I work with limited data, only a small part of the information in the world. (SLIDE) "**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord**". God's intelligence is not ours, His intellect is far beyond ours.

We tend to get frustrated when life doesn't go our way, when doors close in our face, and when prayers seem unanswered. But that's because we are operating with limited information. We simply don't see the whole picture! But... God does. What looks like a dead-end to us might just be a re-route to a new future.

So, here is the offer: (SLIDE each) Unlimited grace, full forgiveness, deep satisfaction, and a future beyond anything you can imagine. All free. No strings attached. All you have to do is say yes.

Will you take the deal, or will you keep searching for meaning in things that will never satisfy? The window to take God up on this offer is open, but you don't have forever to say yes to it. Now maybe you've been on the fence about God... here today or watching online.

Maybe you've been wondering about all this God stuff and you just haven't found your way to it yet. Or, maybe you've been coming to church for years, decades, but you think you've seen and heard it all. Everything is wrote, everything is familiar. Apathy has set in, complacency has taken over.

This is your moment to shake all that up. Stop chasing things that leave you empty and yes to God who offers you everything - free of charge.