



Sunday 19th June 2022 –

A service of worship for use at home

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Bible Month Isaiah booklet: week 2

Theme: Light to the world

Introductory Prayer:

We wait in the dawn, until your light is within us Lord;
Let your deep joy shine out from our eyes.
Grant that your wisdom will inspire us with brightness.
Let the splendour of your glory glow out through our actions,
Come and burn within us until we radiate your light.
Capture our cold hearts, set us ablaze with your love;
Change us and we shall be changed.
Lord, fill us with the light of life. Amen (prayer by David Adam)

Hymn ‘The splendour of the King’

The splendour of the King,
Clothed in majesty;
Let all the earth rejoice,
let all the earth rejoice.
He wraps Himself in light
And darkness tries to hide,
And trembles at His voice, and trembles at His
voice.

*How great is our God, sing with me,
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God.*

And age to age He stands,
And time is in His hand,
Beginning and the end,
beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One,
Father, Spirit, Son,
The Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the
Lamb.

Chorus

Name above all names,
Worthy of all praise;
My heart will sing: how great is our God.
Name above all names,
Worthy of all praise:
My heart will sing: how great is our God.

Chorus

Prayers of Adoration and Praise:

Almighty God, we bring to you the praise and worship of our hearts.
You sent your son, Jesus
To open His arms and invite us into His Kingdom;
Although we are unworthy of your love
You offer us Grace and Forgiveness.
So, many nations praise your greatness,
Do your will on earth Lord,
Free the captives from their prisons,
Treat the poor with worth.
May desert, coast and village
Sing new songs to you.
Light of nations, fill this world
Making all things new. Amen

Readings: You will probably not have heard this first reading - I certainly didn't until I read it just recently. It is probably the 'best kept secret' of Isaiah! However, you will probably recognise the reading from Revelation which tells of a new Heaven and a new earth.

Isaiah 19:16-23 (all nations, even enemies, will worship the LORD) (abbreviated)

The time is coming when the people of Egypt will be as timid as women. They will tremble in terror when they see that the LORD Almighty has stretched out His hand to punish them. The people of Egypt will be terrified of Judah every time they are reminded of the fate that the LORD Almighty has prepared for them.

When that time comes, the Hebrew language will be spoken in five Egyptian cities. The people will take their oaths in the name of the LORD Almighty. One of the cities will be called 'City of the Sun'. When that time comes, there will be an altar to the LORD in the land of Egypt and a stone pillar dedicated to Him at the Egyptian border. They will be symbols of the LORD Almighty's presence in Egypt. When the people are oppressed, they will call out to the LORD of help, He will send someone to help them. The LORD will reveal Himself to the Egyptian people and they will acknowledge and worship Him.....they will turn to Him and He will hear their prayers and heal them.

When that time comes there will be a highway between Egypt and Assyria and these two nations will worship Him together.

Revelation 21:22-26: (the new Heaven and the new earth)

I did not see a Temple in the city, because the Temple is the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb. The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, because the glory of God shines on it and the Lamb is its lamp. The peoples of the world will walk by its light and the kings of the earth will bring their wealth into it. The gates of the city will stand open all day because there will be no night there. The greatness and the wealth of the nations will be brought into the city.

Luke 15:15-24 (who will be invited to the Great Feast) (abbreviated)

When one of the men sitting at the table heard this he said to Jesus "how happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God!"

Jesus said to him, "There was once a man who was giving a great feast to which he invited many people. When it was time for the feast, he sent his servants to tell his guests, 'Come, everything is ready!' But they all began, one after another, to make excuses. The first one told the servant 'I have bought a field and must go and look at it; please accept my apologies.' Another one said 'I have bought five pairs of oxen and I am on my way to try them out; please accept my apologies.' Another one said 'I have just got married, and for that reason I cannot come.'

"The servant went back and told all this to his master. The master was furious and said to his servant, 'Go out to the country roads and lanes and make the people come in so that my house is full. I tell you all that none of those invited will taste my dinner."

Hymn: Living Christ

God who made the stars of heaven,
God who spread the earth,
Breath of every living being,
Fount of life and birth,
You have formed a servant people,
Led us by your hand.
Light of nations, shine on us
Brighten every land.

Spirit of God, equip your people,
All with gifts to share:
Messengers to speak the Gospel,
Ministers of care.
So may valleys rise to greatness,
Mountains be a plain.
Come surprise us; change our lives;
Heal each heart in pain.

Living Christ, the light of nations,
Radiant as the sun,

So, may nations praise you greatness,
Do your will on earth,

Build us up, a growing body;
Knit your church as one.
May our loving be a witness
All the world may see
Send your Spirit, bond of peace
Source of unity.

Free the captives from their prisons,
Treat the poor with worth.
So, may desert, coast and village
Sing new songs to you.
Light of nations, fill the world
Making all things new.

Sermon:

Why are we so afraid of the dark? I always have been since I was a little girl. Our earliest ancestors made fire to push back the darkness and the evil that lurks in the darkness, just beyond our vision. So, it is not surprising that, when the early church Elder, John wrote his vision of the new heaven and the new earth he pictured it as having no darkness at all.

However, the fact that the light of God would shine on **all** the kingdoms of the world was radical indeed. The people of Israel had been used to thinking that their God belonged only to them - they were loved by Almighty God who would save them and fight against their enemies. The very idea that God would welcome their traditional enemies - Egypt and Assyria - into His Kingdom was an abomination as far as they were concerned. Yet, this idea had been gaining ground for some years before the time of Isaiah that Gentiles, like you and me, would be welcome in the New Jerusalem. Many of the later prophets saw that the people of Israel had a message for the Gentiles, especially after the time of the exile in Babylon. But at the time of Isaiah, it was a relatively new concept. And Isaiah saw this as God's light shining on all people, not just on the people of Israel.

Right from the beginning of his ministry, Isaiah speaks about the destruction of Jerusalem because of Israel's disobedience. But then he speaks of a time coming when the Temple would be restored and 'many nations' would stream to new temple.

What, I think would have been offensive to the people of Judah was that Isaiah pictures the traditional enemies of Israel as having a place in God's Kingdom. For us it may seem strange that the people of Jerusalem should be offended as we are used to all people being welcome in God's Kingdom.

However, who are the traditional enemies that are so prominent these days? How would we feel if Russia, China, North Korea were offered places at God's table? Would we find that offensive? I hope not!

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus seemed reluctant to offer His message to the Gentiles. He seems to speak to the Gentile woman quite harshly who came to ask Him to cure her daughter. But her answer to His questions seemed to surprise Him, so He cured the daughter (See Matthew 15:21-28). Perhaps this was the moment when Jesus saw that His message was not simply for Israel but for all people.

From that time on, Jesus seems to have included Gentiles in His ministry. He cured the Centurion's servant, He spoke to a Samaritan woman at the well, He told the story of the Good Samaritan and then He spoke about the Great Feast and He said to His servants to 'Go into the highways and byways and invite the people to come in so that my house may be full. I tell you all that none of those who were invited will taste my dinner' in other words, the feast would be open to everyone but those who had been invited - the people of Israel might find themselves excluded.

At the end of Luke's Gospel, when Jesus was about to Ascend Jesus said to His disciples "and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to **all nations** beginning in Jerusalem.

So, we move on into the book of Acts we find more and more, the offer is made to the Gentiles to join the early church. Philip is directed by God to speak to and Ethiopian Eunuch, who should have been refused entry to the faith of the Jews on two counts; he was an Ethiopian - a Gentile - and he was a eunuch so he had been castrated. But he was willing to be baptised so Philip agreed.

The light which started in the Old Testament and moved on into the New became the light which allowed you and me to find Christ. I wonder 'How visible that light is in our church communities to people from the outside?' I have been reading a book by Philip Yancey called 'What's so Amazing about Grace'. In this book, he suggests that, as a church, we are not very good at showing the Grace

of God. He gives as a rather extreme example of a woman who came to him distraught because she was a prostitute who discovered that she could make more money if she gave her young daughter to men for sex. She was distraught because she realised that this was wrong and was filled with guilt. Yancey suggested that she went along to church to find some help. "What on earth would I do that for" she asked in disgust "they would only make me feel worse than I already do!"

The woman obviously felt that she would be condemned rather than offering the forgiveness that she most wanted. As I said, this was an extreme example but perhaps it says something about a graceless church where we should be offering the Grace of God to those in need of it.

So, I ask again 'How visible is your church community to the people on the outside?' and do we need to do something about it? Is the light of Christ seen in our churches? Are all people welcome in our churches? How would we feel if a prostitute, who had offered her young daughter to men for sex just turned up, looking for help? I am sure that many Christians would offer her help, but I am just as sure that there would be some who would condemn her.

Some years ago, we had a man come into our church who had just come out of prison. He had been the treasurer of another Methodist church but had embezzled the funds and had been caught. He was desperate that people should not know what he had done as he was sure people would condemn him. In this case he was wrong, if he had admitted his wrongs and asked forgiveness, he would not have been condemned. But he was convinced, because of his experience with his former church, that we would be the same. He saw, not God, but the church as graceless. What do you think?

Prayers of Confession:

Lord of Light,

You fill us, your children with your light,

So often your light in us is dimmed by our criticism, selfishness and greed.

There are times when we ignore those in need.

We sometimes look at other people and feel we are better than them so we turn away.

We criticise other people who are doing the best they can.

We can make others feel inferior.

We are unprepared to speak out against injustice.

We are unprepared to stand up for Christ or witness to His love and grace.

And so, the light is dimmed. Forgive us Lord and enable your light to shine through us so that others will see you in us and turn to you and find the answer to all their deepest needs.

We thank you Father that you have promised that when we come to you in repentance you are always prepared to forgive – so forgive us Lord and help us to change. Amen

Prayers of Intercession using the words of Psalm 72

'Teach the king to judge with your righteousness O God;

Share with Him your own justice,

So that he will rule over your people with justice, and govern the oppressed with righteousness.

May the land enjoy prosperity and its people experience justice.

May the king judge the poor fairly; May he help the needy

And defeat their oppressors'.

(We pray for the government of this country and other countries. We pray for justice throughout the world – especially in places where there is violence and war remembering particularly, Ukraine, Yemen, and Afghanistan)

'May your people worship you as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon gives light, for ages to come.

May the king be like rain on the fields, like showers falling on the land.

May righteousness flourish in his lifetime and may prosperity last as long as the moon gives light'.

(We pray for the church and its worship and mission. We pray for those who are suffering the effects of climate change)

'He rescues the poor who call upon him, and those who are needy and neglected.
He has pity on the weak and poor; he saves the lives of those in need.
He rescues them from oppression and violence for their lives are precious to him.'

(We pray for people in need – especially those people who cannot afford to feed themselves and their families)

'Praise the Lord, the God of Israel!
He alone does wonderful things.
Praise His glorious name forever.' **Amen**

Hymn 'At the name of Jesus'

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow,
Every tongue confess Him King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure we should call Him Lord,
Who from the beginning was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season, to receive a name
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came,
Faithfully He bore it spotless to the last,
Brought it back victorious when from death He passed:

Bore it up triumphant, with its human light,
Through all ranks of creatures to the central height,
To the throne of Godhead, to the Father's breast;
Filled it with the glory of that perfect rest.

In your hearts enthrone Him, there let Him subdue
All that is not holy, all that is not true;
Crown Him as your captain in temptations hour:
Let His will enfold you in its light and power.

For this same Lord Jesus shall return again,
With His Father's glory, with His angel train;
All the wreaths of empire meet upon His brow,
And our hearts confess Him King of Glory now.

Final prayer

May your Kingdom come: **And your will be done.**
May your peace be known in this world: **And your will be done.**
May your peace and joy come into our hearts: **And your will be done,**
On earth as in heaven. Amen