



**Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2022 –  
Bible Month week 1  
A service of worship for use at home  
Prepared by Mrs Susan Johnson**

We begin our time of worship this morning by saying together the words of one of the Psalms

**Psalms 119:1- 16 (New Revised Standard Version)**

<sup>1</sup> Happy are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> Happy are those who keep his decrees,  
who seek him with their whole heart,

<sup>3</sup> who also do no wrong,  
but walk in his ways.

<sup>4</sup> You have commanded your precepts  
to be kept diligently.

<sup>5</sup> O that my ways may be steadfast  
in keeping your statutes!

<sup>6</sup> Then I shall not be put to shame,  
having my eyes fixed on all your  
commandments.

<sup>7</sup> I will praise you with an upright heart,  
when I learn your righteous ordinances.

<sup>8</sup> I will observe your statutes;  
do not utterly forsake me.

<sup>9</sup> How can young people keep their way pure?  
By guarding it according to your word.

<sup>10</sup> With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your  
commandments.

<sup>11</sup> I treasure your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against you.

<sup>12</sup> Blessed are you, O LORD;  
teach me your statutes.

<sup>13</sup> With my lips I declare  
all the ordinances of your mouth.

<sup>14</sup> I delight in the way of your decrees  
as much as in all riches.

<sup>15</sup> I will meditate on your precepts,  
and fix my eyes on your ways.

<sup>16</sup> I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.

**Hymn StF 41**

Blessed be your name, reminds us as we begin to worship that all is not always sweetness and light but that God is there worthy of praise.

Blessed be Your name  
In the land that is plentiful  
Where Your streams of abundance flow  
Blessed be Your name  
And blessed be Your name  
When I'm found in the desert place  
Though I walk through the wilderness  
Blessed be your name  
Every blessing You pour out I'll  
Turn back to praise  
And when the darkness closes in, Lord  
Still I will say

Blessed be Your name  
When the sun's shining down on me  
When the world's "all as it should be"  
Blessed be You name  
And blessed be Your name  
On the road marked with suffering  
Though there's pain in the offering  
Blessed be Your name  
Every blessing You pour out I'll  
Turn back to praise  
And when the darkness closes in, Lord  
Still I will say

*Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name*

*Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your name  
Blessed be the name of the Lord  
Blessed be Your glorious name*

You give and take away  
You give and take away  
My heart will choose to say  
Lord, blessed be Your name  
I will bless Your name

*Blessed be the name of the Lord*  
*Blessed be Your name*  
*Blessed be the name of the Lord*  
*Blessed be Your glorious name*

### **Prayers of adoration and confession**

Loving and gracious God to you we come this day. Lord God, giver of life and love and peace. We bring ourselves close to you needing your touch and your guidance for without that we lose our way. So let us be still and quiet together for a few moments accepting that God's holy spirit is here, moving in us among us and between us. Knowing that God knows all things and leads his people in ways that answer the prayer May your kingdom come.

Slow your breathing down. May like to say these words," Come Holy Spirit." Now be still.

Present here with you Lord we ask that you receive our worship and praise. We also seek your forgiveness for those things which we have done that have damaged our relationship with you and others. For those things that have not been part of your kingdom of justice and mercy and grace.

We hear your words of forgiveness. Our sins are forgiven in Jesus' name.

Amen

Lord's prayer  
Our Father in heaven  
Hallowed be your name  
Your Kingdom come  
Your will be done on earth as in heaven  
Give us today us our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
As we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.  
Amen

Today we are joining the circuit in reflecting n some passages from the book of Isaiah written around 740 BCE. This would have been the time of the Iron Age in England. In 597 there was Times of great unrest and disturbance - the exile of the nation of Judah to Babylon. A prophet's voice was surely needed, speaking God's truth to the King.

Traditionally it has been believed that there were 2 Isaiah's, but recent scholars are now talking about the possibility of three prophets' writing this book, or even more who had been students of the Isaiah's.

The book is predominantly a book of poetry beginning with warning to the nation of Judah, words of rebuke. As a prophet Isaiah would not have been popular for many years challenging the behaviour of the people Isaiah –legend has it that he was sawn in half under the reign of Manasseh. but then after the exile Isaiah brings hope and comfort to the people.

Chapters 1- 33 speak of punishment for failure to follow the covenant ways, 34 – 36 looking forward to restoration. Chapters 40 -55 also look forward to restoration and in chapter 55 – 66 there are more warnings.

But today we begin with Isaiah 5, often referred to the Song of the Vineyard. God is portrayed as the owner of a vineyard.

## Reading Isaiah 5: 1- 8

### The Song of the Vineyard

**5** I will sing for the one I love  
a song about his vineyard:  
My loved one had a vineyard  
on a fertile hillside.  
**2** He dug it up and cleared it of stones  
and planted it with the choicest vines.  
He built a watchtower in it  
and cut out a winepress as well.  
Then he looked for a crop of good grapes,  
but it yielded only bad fruit.  
**3** “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people  
of Judah,  
judge between me and my vineyard.  
**4** What more could have been done for my  
vineyard  
than I have done for it?  
When I looked for good grapes,  
why did it yield only bad?

**5** Now I will tell you  
what I am going to do to my vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge,  
and it will be destroyed;  
I will break down its wall,  
and it will be trampled.  
**6** I will make it a wasteland,  
neither pruned nor cultivated,  
and briars and thorns will grow there.  
I will command the clouds  
not to rain on it.”  
**7** The vineyard of the LORD Almighty  
is the nation of Israel,  
and the people of Judah  
are the vines he delighted in.  
And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;  
for righteousness, but heard cries of  
distress.

Who is the loved one? The nation of Judah with whom a covenant had been made. God would be their God and they would be his people. In Deuteronomy 28 we read

**9** The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in obedience to him. **10** Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. **11** The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. But it appears that the while God had been looking after the vineyard it had not been fruitful – yielded bad crops. So, the vineyard will be destroyed.

Verses 8 – 23 provide the evidence of what had gone wrong with the vineyard. You might like to read them later but to sum up: there had been excessive drinking, no regard for the deeds of the Lord or his works. Arrogance of the rich. People who called evil good and good evil. Justice will come. Deceit and bribes between the people.

It's all a bit of a disaster for the people. You can see why this Isaiah was not popular. The nation has been judged.

But let's pause there. Because there is more to Isaiah. Turn towards the end of the book. Restoration is promised by the same God who has judged their behaviour in the past.

### Isaiah 58: 6-12

**6** “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:  
to loose the chains of injustice  
and untie the cords of the yoke,  
to set the oppressed free  
and break every yoke?  
**7** Is it not to share your food with the hungry  
and to provide the poor wanderer with  
shelter—  
when you see the naked, to clothe them,  
and not to turn away from your own flesh

and blood?  
**8** Then your light will break forth like the dawn,  
and your healing will quickly appear;  
then your righteousness<sup>[a]</sup> will go before you,  
and the glory of the LORD will be your rear  
guard.  
**9** Then you will call, and the LORD will answer;  
you will cry for help, and he will say: Here  
am I.

“If you do away with the yoke of oppression,  
with the pointing finger and malicious talk,  
<sup>10</sup> and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the  
hungry  
and satisfy the needs of the oppressed,  
then your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your night will become like the  
noonday.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD will guide you always;

he will satisfy your needs in a sun-  
scorched land  
and will strengthen your frame.  
You will be like a well-watered garden,  
like a spring whose waters never fail.  
<sup>12</sup> Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins  
and will raise up the age-old foundations;  
you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls,  
Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.

## Hymn StF God of forgiveness your people you freed

God of forgiveness, Your People you freed  
And saw then return to idolatrous greed;  
with anger against them, you rightly burned,  
but then to compassion and forgiveness you turned.

God of forgiveness, the Saviour you sent,  
proclaiming good news, with the call to repent.  
With merciful love and forgiveness he came,  
The lost and the headstrong to embrace and reclaim.

God of forgiveness your power we implore,  
With mercy and wholeness our lives to restore,  
Perverse and misguided, our souls we deprave  
O come full of healing, with compassion to save.

The big question arising for me as I have reflected on this passage is: How do we deal with the two aspects of God’s character? **God as Judge and God as provider.**

Let’s see if two current day examples can help us.

Do any of you know of or watch Judge Rinder on TV?

Here we have a Judge who listens to different people’s stories, hears the evidence and presents his judgement. Only watched it a couple of time but have been aware of the person – as he was on Strictly Come Dancing and researching his past with his mother. Seems a very compassionate and daring person – as a judge he has to follow the law, but his personality still comes into the delivery of a verdict.

Is that something like God as Judge – he has to remain true to his character – his holiness, his longing for justice, his desire to love and look after the nation he calls his own. Just like those of us who have responsibilities as leaders, teachers, parents, workers. We all make judgements every day. But God’s judgements must show his grace and mercy as well as his desire for justice.

How many of you are gardeners? Time energy love goes into the growth of all plants and vegetables. My grandfather had an allotment and grew fruit and vegetables for the family and when times were hard for the rest of the street. He became the provider.

What did he do when the plants did not produce fruit? Bugs, pests, thieves? What would you do? Get angry, look at what had gone wrong – judge the way you had worked. The first time he grew tomatoes he didn’t protect them enough from caterpillars and the whole crop was eaten overnight. Was this his own fault? So, what do you have to do? Pick yourself up and start again.

We start again – and for the way forward we look to Jesus' ministry. Luke 4 v 18

**The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind and to let the oppressed go free.**

So, in the Iron Age Isaiah called on his king and people to return to God's ways. We are called even today in the 21 C to follow this same commission of Jesus as we seek to make God's kingdom come here and now. Let's commit ourselves to God's purposes as we sing.

### **Hymn StF 404 God's spirit in in my heart**

God's Spirit is in my heart,  
He has called me and set me apart.  
This is what I have to do,  
what I have to do.

*He sent me to give the Good News to the poor,  
Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more,  
Tell blind people that they can see,  
And set the downtrodden free  
And go tell everyone the news that the Kingdom of God has come,  
And go tell everyone the news that that God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,  
So I'm sending you out to be  
My witnesses throughout the world,  
The whole of the world.  
*He sent ...*

Don't worry what you have to say,  
Don't worry because on that day  
God's Spirit will speak in your heart,  
Will speak in your heart.  
*He sent ...*

### **Prayers**

Begin with those you know and move out into the wider community and the world.

Hold before God and ask his blessing in the silence on,

the broken,  
the hurting,  
the hungry,  
the lost and bewildered,  
the frightened  
the lonely.

God who provides and judges show us how to live and work so that there will be good news for the poor, the broken hearted will find healing. May your kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name we pray.  
Amen.

## **Hymn StF 706 Longing for light**

Longing for light, we wait in darkness  
Longing for truth, we turn to You  
Make us Your own, your holy people  
Light for the world to see

*Christ, be our light  
Shine in our hearts  
Shine through the darkness  
Christ, be our light  
Shine in Your church gathered today*

Longing for shelter, many are homeless  
Longing for warmth, many are cold  
Make us Your building, sheltering others  
Walls made of living stone  
*Christ, be our light*

Many the gifts, many the people  
Many the hearts that yearn to belong  
Let us be servants to one another  
Making Your kingdom come  
*Christ, be our light*

## **Blessing**

May the Blessing of God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with us now and always.

Amen.