

**Dorset South & West. Written Service, Sunday 17th July 2022.**

**'Faithful Servant'.**

**Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.**

**Call to worship Psalm 52**

I trust in the steadfast love of God for ever and ever.

I will thank you for ever, because of what you have done.

In the presence of the faithful I will proclaim your name, for it is good.

StF 255 The kingdom of God is justice and joy.

The kingdom of God  
is justice and joy,  
for Jesus restores  
what sin would destroy;  
God's power and glory  
in Jesus we know,  
and here and hereafter  
the kingdom shall grow.

The kingdom of God  
is mercy and grace,  
the prisoners are freed,  
the sinners find place,  
the outcast are welcomed  
God's banquet to share,  
and hope is awakened  
in place of despair.

The kingdom of God  
is challenge and choice,  
believe the good news,  
repent and rejoice!  
His love for us sinners  
brought Christ to his cross,  
our crisis of judgement  
for gain or for loss.

God's kingdom is come,  
the gift and the goal,  
in Jesus begun,  
in heaven made whole;  
the heirs of the kingdom  
shall answer his call,  
and all things cry glory  
to God all in all!

**Prayer of adoration.**

Dear Lord Jesus we sing of the glories of your kingdom and we praise you for the wonders and grace that we find when we reflect on your kingdom. How you left that glorious kingdom for our salvation. You are the faithful servant of your Heavenly Father.

We know Lord Jesus, the things we do each day fill our minds completely, or so it seems, and we find it hard to give You the space to do those works of grace You long to do in us. To find space to be your faithful servants too.

So come to us in this moment of worship, and let your Spirit lift our souls above our worldly anxieties to the heavenly places of joy and wonder, love and praise. Take us there, dear Jesus, at this time of worship and in times of your choosing and at every instant of our need; and may our lives give testimony to the transforming power of even just a moment spent with You. **AMEN**

**Bible Readings.**

**Isaiah 61: 1-2**

The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God;  
to comfort all who mourn;

**Luke 4: 14-24**

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

'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,  
to let the oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, "Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum."' And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's home town.

### **Reflection:**

I am sure you will have spotted that the Isaiah passage is quoted by Jesus in his proclamation in the synagogue.

In this Bible month when we are focusing on Isaiah you will have been reminded of the prophecies that Jesus is claiming to fulfil. Such as, a light coming into a world full of darkness.

When we read the gospel stories we see how Jesus in his life on earth fulfilled the prophecies. He brought good news to the poor. Remember he came at a time when people were oppressed by the Roman occupation. Can you think of any gospel stories that remind us just what it was like at that time? We don't have to go far from the birth stories, people made to travel for the census. No room at the inn for His birth.

He healed the sick, but the words in today's reading, speak of binding up the broken hearted, release from oppression, setting captives free, recovery of sight to the blind. Now we can find many stories of physical testimony to those acts, Blind Bartimaeus for example. However my mind turns rather to the unseen and not so obvious. Yes people have physical sicknesses but we also face so much that we describe as 'making us sick of heart'. People are lonely, in despair for all sorts of reasons and suffer in so many different ways. Do you remember how Jesus chastised the disciples asking them if they were so blind they still could not see?

I guess we can warm to that in a sad kind of way. Who among us has not had to apologise for not noticing or hearing what a friend or family member has been enduring? 'I am so sorry I just didn't realise', we say.

Jesus our faithful friend in his lifetime on earth and from his glorious kingdom sees and proclaims liberty from our suffering. Which might be very different from a physical removal of a problem and more a light to support us when we are going through the difficult times of life.

Particularly as we think of this passage's origin. Isaiah was speaking to a people in exile. What must that have been like? Horrors we can't begin to imagine. Or we think of people in the time in which Jesus quoted this passage and we have already thought of some of their problems living under a Roman occupation of their land. Lastly this passage also speaks to the generations past and to come who look for hope in these words.

Reflecting on a literal translation of these words is to pay them a disservice and to minimise God's faithfulness.

I would not like to think for example, of the release of captives, that it meant all the criminals would be set free. The Nazarene equivalent to 'Burglar Bill', finding his chains released and his prison cell door flung open! Rather I would like to ponder on the stories of how so many people in the scriptures on meeting Jesus, repented of their sins and were then set free from whatever compulsion held them captive. They begin seeing the light that Jesus can shed on a better way of living.

I have a very old walking stick that sits in the corner of the room. It has a battery operated light in the handle. I rarely use it but if I need it, I still marvel that despite my neglect and its age the light still comes on. I get not only support but light for my way with that old walking stick.

A sad reflection could be that we kind of treat Jesus in the same way. When our walk is unsteady and the path unclear we reach for him. Our faithful unflinching friend who gives us light and support on our way.

I know one day the battery on my stick will not work and perhaps other parts of the stick might through age and neglect give out. That is the wonder of Jesus' proclamation. The fulfilment was not just for his earthly life time but for all the time. It's promise will never age or wear out. He is always ready to release us from whatever binds us. Worries, anxiety, the pains we face in life. If we turn to him he is there for us.

Not perhaps giving us what we think we want but showing us how we can be and empowering us to be the best we can in the circumstances we must face.

Wouldn't it be an amazing world if the Isaiah prophecy fulfilment meant that no one suffered in an possible way. No poverty, no pain, no wars. No rising fuel costs, no war in Ukraine or the many other places in our world where people are dying. No gun crime, no jealousy and oh we can go on. But I can't help thinking of how the old film 'Stepford wives' showed how awful life could be, if everything seemed perfect, but free will is removed. Life becomes an almost automated mundane existence. Like a game of chess that has been replayed and replayed and the pawns know their place and the moves they are constrained to make.

Ask yourself why did Jesus Christ have to come to earth? Why take on this prophecy of Isaiah. We know the answer is to die for our sins. We are a fallen race. We can't help ourselves.

I was on holiday in Tenerife just awhile ago and the best part of the resort for me was the adult only pool and sun bed area! Bliss, especially as I went in school term time and so the resort seemed to be overrun with tiny screaming, 'adorable' little children! However in my blissful pool, the only one over looking the sea, several times a day you would hear, 'but I want to go in This Pool!' Screamed out at parents and grandparents. Despite having five other pools with lots of kids activities in them. Paraphernalia that sprayed water, slides, fun inflatables of every kind! 'No, I want to go in this one! ' All it had was a sea view and a good depth to swim up and down. Plus thankfully a vigilant lifeguard who in broken English would proclaim to the tiny tots; 'it is Forbidden!' Despite being told no, most had to be dragged away screaming all the louder and despite everything that they had which was far superior, they still wanted what is 'off limits.' We are a fallen race, we have a wonderful life but what let's us down is we want the forbidden fruit.

Try analysing what actually upset you in that last disagreement or disappointment. Was it you just didn't get your own way?

Jesus said in the words of Isaiah I have come to give release to the captives. He is faithful and calls us to turn to him and he will set us free to be faithful and to a fuller richer life in Him. To our faithful servant and friend may our prayer be that which we know as the serenity prayer.

God, grant me  
*Serenity*  
to ACCEPT the  
things I cannot change,  
*Courage* to CHANGE  
the things I can,  
and  
*Wisdom*  
to know the difference.

StF 404 God's spirit is 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 down-trodden free,  
and go tell everyone  
the news that the kingdom of God has come;  
and go tell everyone  
the news that God's kingdom has come.*

Just as the Father sent me,  
so I'm sending you out to be  
my witness throughout the world -  
the whole of the world:

Don't carry a load in your pack;  
you don't need two shirts on your back;  
God's workers can earn their own keep -  
can earn their own keep:

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:

**Prayers of intercession** based on Martin Leckebusch hymn In an age of twisted values StF 703

Take a moment to think of what you have read or heard about this week that has made you concerned.

Now let us take those thoughts in prayer using the words of the hymn let us pray:

In an age of twisted values we have lost the truth we need;  
in sophisticated language we have justified our greed;  
by our struggle for possessions we have robbed the poor and weak -  
hear our cry and heal our nations: your forgiveness, Lord, we seek.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

We have built discrimination on our prejudice and fear;  
hatred swiftly turns to cruelty if we hold resentments dear.  
For communities divided by the walls of class and race  
hear our cry and heal our nations: show us, Lord, your love and grace.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

When our families are broken; when our homes are full of strife;  
when our children are bewildered, when they lose their way in life;  
when we fail to give the aged all the care we know we should -  
hear our cry and heal our nations with your tender fatherhood.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

We who hear your word so often choose so rarely to obey;  
turn us from our wilful blindness, give us truth to light our way.  
In the power of your Spirit come to cleanse us, make us new:  
hear our cry and heal our nations till our nations honour you.

Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer

### **We say the Lord's Prayer.**

StF 566 Take my life, and let it be.

Take my life, and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
take my moments and my days,  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands, and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love;  
take my feet, and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing  
always, only, for my King;  
take my lips, and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.

Take my silver and my gold,  
not a mite would I withhold;  
take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine;  
take my heart - it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure-store;  
take myself, and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee.

### **The blessing**

Let the majesty of the Father be the light by which you walk,  
the compassion of the Son be the love by which you walk,  
the presence of the Spirit be the power by which you walk.  
And may the Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace. Amen.