

Ripon & Lower Dales Methodist Circuit
Worship at Home
3rd July 2022

This is the 1st week of Bible literacy month and our first snapshot from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

The nature of God's Love for us. 10:7:22

A Prophet is called to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. (Pastor Swindoll).

Call to Worship

Still within us now, O Lord, any voice but Yours,
Lest we hear but do not receive, lest we listen
but do not act,
Lest we know but do not love.
And let Your Holy Spirit turn our hearts and lives
to Your truth.

Amen.

Hymn 103

God is love: let heaven adore Him;
God is love: let earth rejoice;
Let creation sing before Him,
And exalt Him with one voice.
He who laid the earth's foundation,
He who spread the heavens above
He who breathes through all creation,
He is love, eternal love.

God is love: and He enfolding
All the world in one embrace,
With unfailing grasp is holding
Every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking under
sorrows iron rod,
Then they find that selfsame aching
Deep within the heart of God.

God is love: and though with blindness
Sin afflicts each human soul,
God's eternal loving kindness
Holds and guides and keeps them whole.
Sin and death and hell shall never
O'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
O'er the universe must reign.

Prayer of Praise

O God whose glory the heavens are telling, the
earth Your power, the sea Your might,
And whose greatness all the hosts of heaven
proclaim;

To You belongs all glory, honour, majesty and
praise.

Blessed be the love which chose us before the
foundation of the world.

Blessed be the grace that saved us before the
world began.

Blessed be the glory prepared for us from all
eternity.

Blessed be God for ever and blessed be His
glorious name! **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Intro to reading

God called the people of Israel to be a holy
people, set aside for Him and gave them a land
to live in, where He could be their God and they
His special people. During the reign of King
Uzziah, who died in the year Isaiah was called to
be God's prophet, Judah was very prosperous;
the people felt secure and strayed away for true
worship of God.

We will now have our first reading from Isaiah 5
v1-7

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.

Talk

This reading begins with God's great love for His people and in that love he has given them a good land to live in. I really like the description of the vineyard, it is a perfect one, the des res of vineyards, ready for the people, the vines, to grow in and produce toe best grapes ever.

So, what sort of fruit should the people have been producing? Well, if they really worshipped God putting Him first in their lives and listening to the people he sent to guide them, the prophets, if they followed His Law.

'Love the Lord your God completely and love your neighbour as yourself.'

They would grow closer to Him, become more like their Creator, and produce a caring just society, which would be a beacon to the nations as they were meant to be.

But things have gone wrong, the fruits they are producing are dried up mouldy grapes.

Why with a loving all-powerful God to guide them are they producing bad grapes?

I will leave you all to read verses 8-30, and chapter 58v1-12; to see that the peoples' prosperity and luxury led them to self-centred lives. They turned their backs on God, going their own way, yes they still worshipped God, but did not think that this should then have any impact on the way they behaved in everyday life. They treated God as if He was one of the false gods of other nations, not the Creator of Heaven and Earth who could see right through to their hearts.

They became immoral and corrupt denying the rights of the poor, illegally taking the land from the poor and spending their days in drunkenness.

The Lord God looked for justice and righteousness and found none.

How do we measure up today, with the gap between rich and poor, children not having enough to eat or a warm home? What would our fruit look like in God's vineyard?

And just look how their self-centred, selfish behaviour impacted on the good land they had been given, it would become a wasteland. Just as, with our selfish use of God's creation may become.

God loves His people, but He is also a just God. He made a covenant with the people of Judah, which they must keep. If they do not repent and change their ways, then their vineyard will be destroyed, the land will become barren and a wasteland and God will take the land from them. This is tough love. God's righteous anger, just as Jesus showed when He drove the merchants out of the Temple and confronted the hypocritical leaders of religion.

2.

The people, having spurned God, must learn the hard way, and be ready to start again, Isaiah 30v15, 'Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved, say the Sovereign God.'

Prayer of Confession

Lord, what a wonderful world. Forgive us that we spoil it.

Life is a precious possession: forgive us that we waste it.

Love is the greatest gift: forgive us that we devalue it.

Lord God, Creator, recall us to Your purpose.

Lord Jesus, Redeemer, renew in us Your life.

Spirit of the Living God, renew us with Your gifts

Amen.

Hymn 727

God in His love for us lent us this planet,
Gave it a purpose in time and in space:
Small as a spark from the fire of creation,
Cradle of life and the home of our race.

Thanks be to God for its bounty and beauty,
Life that sustains us in body and mind:
Plenty for all, if we learn how to share it,
Riches undreamed of to fathom and find.

Long have our human wars ruined its harvest;
Long has earth bowed to the terror of force;
Long have we wasted what others have needed,
Poisoned the fountain of life at its source.

Earth is the Lord's: it is ours to enjoy it,
Ours, as God's stewards, to farm and defend.
From its pollution, misuse, and destruction,
Good Lord, deliver us, world without end!

John 15 v1-8 The Vine and the Branches

(Jesus speaking).

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit,

While every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^{2a} so that it will be even more fruitful.

³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.

⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches.

If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;

Apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers;

Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
Ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit,
Showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Talk

So, what does an all-powerful loving but just God do to teach His wayward people about the depth and strength of His self-giving love for them, which they can share in as part of God's family.

He sends His own Son to show us what He is like and to die for us.

Here, Jesus is the true vine, the perfect vine and we who believe in Him, are the branches. We remain or abide in Jesus. We are in constant contact with Him, through prayer, through our whole life's experience.

This is how those vines in God's vineyard should have grown, but they didn't.

We have a living vibrant relationship with God through Jesus. We learn and grow in practical loving.

We put God first and love our neighbour as ourselves. But sometimes we get it wrong, then God though the Spirit guides us back to the true and fruitful way. The best way, which is best for us, true life in Jesus and it gives God our creator glory.

God our gardener, prunes us to make us more fruitful, to deepen our faith.

But branches which do not bear fruit are cut off and burned. Only those branches not the vine, for God has given us the perfect vine for us to grow in, Jesus our Rescuer and friend. There will always those, like the people of Judah, Isaiah confronted, who turn their back on Jesus and go their own way; so cut off from the goodness and grace He gives, they wither and die. As do those Christians again like those Judeans, who pay only lip service to God, words without deeds, producing leaves and no fruit, They are thrown away by the gardener, God. This is tough love, not wishy-washy and sentimental, but love, God's love which in Jesus overcame death for us.

Hymn 363

My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like You.
All of my days I want to praise
The wonders of Your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
Tower of refuge and strength, 3.

Let every breath, all that I am,
Never cease to worship You.

*Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,
Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains shall bow down
And the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name.
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands.
Forever I'll love You, forever I'll stand.
Nothing compares to the
Promise I have in You.*

Intercessions

Almighty, Everlasting and Creator God
We come before You because Jesus said we may and we ask because he showed us that you are a God of love and compassion and will listen to us.

So we pray for this your world and it's peoples with all their questions, all their concerns and all their needs.

We pray for your Worldwide Church and especially for this circuit of Ripon and lower dales.

Gracious God in a time in which so many seek direction we pray that you would inspire the hearts and minds of your Christian People to live our faith in deed and word, so those who hear may open their mind to your voice and open their hearts to the knowledge of your love in Christ.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

We pray for Your world which, through the power of modern media, is revealed daily to us in all its violence, disaster and shallowness. You have placed its care and our future in our own hands and so we pray for a tireless striving for peace between the nations, a common realisation of the catastrophic dangers posed by climate change and a sharing in the burden to support the poor and under-developed regions. We remember and pray for the United Nations and all other agencies and charities involved in bringing aid, order and relief in so many world-wide conflicts and disaster areas.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

We pray for all in our own community with those whom we meet day by day; our families, friends and neighbours, our work colleagues. We remember especially and pray for those who fear for the future, through financial worries, through un-employment, through addictions and through family breakdowns and ask that in all these concerns You Son Jesus Christ can be offered as the real hope on which shattered lives can be rebuilt.

Lord in Your mercy. - 'Hear our prayer'

Loving God we think now of those in most need in our own community, the elderly, the housebound and those in care homes, hospital and hospice and for the work and devotion of Carers whose skill and compassion bring both material and spiritual comfort at times of need. We pray for those who feel the pain of grief at the loss of a loved one whether recent or as each anniversary passes.

Help us to support all those who mourn both with our prayers, with words of comfort and with practical help both this day and in the days and weeks to come.

Jesus Christ, Light of the World, a light which no darkness can quench turn our darkness into light; in your light we see light.

Merciful Father, "Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen".

Lord, we commit ourselves to You. Be with us in our greatest need,
Meet us on our journey and send us on our way.
Renewed in Your love and power, rejoicing in hope,
Giving ourselves in service to You through others,
Willing to be changed by You, and becoming more like You every day.

Amen.

Hymn 370

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what Thou dost love,
And do what Thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
Until my heart is pure,
Until with Thee I will one will,
To do and to endure.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
Till I am wholly Thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with Thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, Breath of God;
So shall I never die,
But live with Thee the perfect life
Of Thine eternity.

Blessing

The blessing of the God of life be ours.
The blessing of the loving Christ be ours.
The blessing of the Holy Spirit be ours.
To cherish us, to help us, to make us holy.
Amen.

Jan Goodall.