

FULL SERVICE FOR WRITTEN/RECORD SUNDAY, 17 JULY 2022

Introduction

Welcome to this recorded service today wherever you are and whenever you are watching. My name is John Bailey and I am a local preacher in the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit. This is the 2nd of 4 services for Methodism's Bible Month, studying the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah covers over 200 years of history – more than the lifespan of any one person. Perceived wisdom is that the book has 3 authors the 2nd and 3rd writing in the style of Isaiah. This book covers the fall of the northern territories of Israel to Assyria and then the hundred years of continued warnings about possible exile, the Babylonians beating the Assyrians and then sacking Jerusalem and taking the majority of residents into exile for 70 or so years before the remnant returns to Jerusalem under the reign of the Persians and start rebuilding the temple and the city.

Last week, the theme was tough love, looking at the way that God described the nation of Judah as being like his own vineyard but the vineyard essentially produced little or no fruit. At this point it was not too late for the people to change and Isaiah spent much of his time warning of the tough love that would follow if they did not change.

This week our theme is "light to the world". Initially however, we are using a passage that is not considered very often, to lead us into the subject.

Call to worship

In the days to come,
while the mountain of the Lord's house shall
be established as the highest of the
mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
Isaiah 2:2-3 – NRSV

In whatever we do and wherever we are,
God's with us. Now let us sing our first hymn
from Singing the Faith – 109

Hymn **STF 109** **In the**
darkness of the still night,
Frodsham MC – <https://youtu.be/1sjdJ3x0K9Y>

Prayers of adoration confession

let us pray:

Come into the presence of the Lord,
all who suffer and struggle.
Come into the presence of the Lord,
all who rejoice and are glad.
Come into the presence of the Lord,
those in need of healing and those who know
God's grace.
Come into the presence of the Lord,
for here is rest and peace for your hearts.
Come into the presence of the Lord,
for here is forgiveness and strength for living.
Amen.

There is a response to our further prayer of
adoration – At the bidding "you are our Lord",
your response is "**for you are holy.**" –
Repeat.

Glorious God, you sit enthroned above all,
you are exalted over all peoples,
and yet you love each of us as your own dear
child.

We praise your great and awesome name.
You are our Lord
for you are holy.

Mighty God,
you love justice and have established equity.
we praise your great and awesome name,
and worship at your feet,
You are our Lord
for you are holy.

Ever present God,
God of Moses and Aaron and Samuel,
you spoke through all the prophets
and led your people to freedom;
you gave them laws and statutes
yet forgave their wrongdoings;
we praise your great and awesome name
and would worship on your holy mountain,
You are our Lord
for you are holy.

Gracious God,
you have sent your Spirit,
to guard and to guide us,
to enable us to spread your word and your
light
throughout the world.
We praise your great and awesome name.
You are our Lord
for you are holy
Amen.

and a short prayer of confession:

We have seen the glory of the Lord,

us. It can really feel as though there is no way out the situation that we have found ourselves in and we continue to sink in the mire. Such a situation can leave us feeling unwanted, despised, and even hated. It feels as though you are wading through treacly, sticky muck that sucks you down and won't let you go. Hope disappears and you are left floundering.

I believe that we all, at some time or other, need a light to shine into our own particular world so that we can follow the path that leads to something so much better. But I would like you to think about how, personally, you came to Christ – how did you get to know Jesus? Do you owe it to someone who invited you to some meeting or did they, when listening to you show or reflect a light that led you to thinking that you wanted something that they had? Was it simply the fact that someone who is kind and understanding came alongside you and helped you work out a solution to a problem? What was that initial trigger for you? What worked for you may well work for others and what happened to others may be different but still effective.

So, to my way of thinking, our role as Christians is to invite, to draw in, getting others to know what God in Jesus has done for us. We have to radiate out to others, is to show what Jesus means and how he can affect their lives to the greatest extent possible. That Jesus offers change to a life that has great potential. We have to let others see the potential that has been generated in us through knowing Jesus.

Having looked personal level how do we transfer that to the church. How do we make our church arise like Jerusalem so that its light radiates outwards and draws people in. I don't have to point out that the church is actually the people not the building, so the previous applies! Part of the light that shines out from the church is us. So what we do outside the church is very important, because the examples that we set gives others the chance to visualise and acknowledge what knowing Jesus does for someone. Wherever we are, in workplace or leisure, our reactions and the way we work illustrates what we feel and do as Christians. It is not rocket science – as long as we do what Jesus would have us do, then we can set no better example. We always have to guard against loose moments and by that, I mean moments of loose tongue. It is so easy to say something or react to something with harsh or unthinking words can tarnish the image we give of Jesus. Yes, I know we are all

human and of course we make mistakes. We show who we are by acknowledging that and always trying to make good where we have done something wrong.

How do we advertise the church? I believe that if the church is going to be a centre that shines a light outwards, then it has to be a place that is used on a frequent basis. Opening on one day a week is not an option. The church has to be a welcoming viable unit for more than just church services. We need people who don't think church, to come in via other activities that simply need a venue. Some of our churches are used for food distribution, and the groups where talk and chat is important. Anything that helps get those not used church thinking church has to be a positive move in shining God's light outwards, welcoming others in.

Of course, what I have mainly focused on is about how we can react and create the right atmosphere to entice others through our light. But who are the others? Our first reading showed us who should be involved. Each one of us has the ability to become children of God through Christ. God considers that all people have the ability to learn of him and worship him. Isaiah shows us that those we think as enemies and those who don't seem to fit in to our way of thinking should all be considered. It's not just the homeless and those we consider to be outside society – those who might walk into our churches and not necessarily receive a warm welcome.

We are talking about all those people/countries who we consider cause us problems. Those workers in countries who undercut everything we make, which has changed us from a manufacturing base to a service base, should be welcomed into the light. Those who create war and those who plunder the earth's resources should also be welcomed into God's family because knowing Jesus will create change. Those who take advantage of current situations to manipulate people and charge incredible amounts of money when they need to move home for whatever reason. Our enemies too should be welcomed into the light. I am sure that you could think of many other examples of those who cause problems who need to be invited to meet Jesus.

Isaiah in chapter 56 says "and the foreigners who commit themselves the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord..... These I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer". So this releases my 3rd point which is that a great deal can be

achieved through prayer. Prayer to help people whom you get alongside; prayer to stop all war and bring peace over the world; prayer to encourage people who have a need to reach out for Jesus and to know the light of the world. Prayer is a wonderful thing that joins everything together and we know that Jesus hears our petitions.

It may be worth mentioning that when David first conquered the city of Jerusalem he captured “the fortress of Zion” and named it the city of David. Later when Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, the site was poetically called Mount Zion. Zion symbolises God’s presence and protection for his people. It is a place of security, tranquillity and rest. In essence, however, Zion is wherever God and his people are. This adds a moral dimension, for wherever God is among his people, then they must live according to his ways – trust, justice, righteousness and commitment. In many Christian hymns, Zion is used to refer to the ultimate kingdom of God.

So, we need to be prepared for whatever God asks us to do. We need to show ourselves to those around us, to those we meet, to those who pass by – we somehow have to demonstrate through our demeanour, through the way we act, the way we present that we have something special. We have something special that they need – that they should want. Our light that reflects Jesus is bright and is there to attract others. And then this is backed up by prayer for all those we know who need and want to meet Christ. That prayer that links each one of us together in God’s name.

I pray that each one of us can help to create a place or situation that allows God’s light to shine through us into others so that we can all enjoy peace that passes all understanding and a life that continues to learn about Jesus get to know him more and more as we grow in him and he in us, so that each one of us can become part of that light to the world.

Amen.

Prayers for Others

There is a response for these prayers: at the bidding, “Lord in your mercy”, your response is “**hear our prayer**”.

First of all, I feel we need to bring the situation in Ukraine before God

Loving Lord,
we bring before you once again, the problems of Ukraine. We think of all those people

already displaced, becoming refugees in many countries, and our hearts go out to all those in the Donbas region who are suffering under the intense fighting. We also pray for the people of Russia, that they may understand what is really happening.

We pray that peace may envelop the country but acknowledge that neither side nor their backers seem to have any inclination to lay down their arms. Whilst politicians talk of more and more weapons, we pray that peace remains upon the negotiating table. Individually, we seem to be able to influence little and therefore accept that all we can do is place this situation into your hands, knowing that you see all and understand all and we simply pray that your will be done.

Lord in your mercy.

hear our prayer

Living God, joyfully we find in Jesus what it means to be fully human.

You give us hope that one day we shall be like Him.

May all His sisters and brothers know fullness of life and God’s glory be seen.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We pray for people who are hungry or thirsty, in need of food and drink, for strangers hoping for a welcome, for people without proper clothing, for those who are ill at home or in hospital, and for people in prison and all affected by crime.

Lord, these are our sisters and brothers too, help us to do what we can to care and to ensure adequate support.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

We look to the day when all of creation will be set free from decay to enter into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We pray for the climate crisis that the world’s governments may not falter in their commitment to reduce global temperatures.

We pray for the work of NGOs, charities and faith groups raising awareness, lobbying governments and garnering support.

Lord in Your mercy

Hear our prayer

Lord God, who has made it known that You
love justice and equity,
we pray for a better sharing of the world's
resources,
for an end to poverty and inequality.
We remember the work of Christian Aid
working with some of the world's poorest
communities
and we pray for the work of Covax, the World
Health Organisation's body
tasked with the equitable sharing of vaccines
which are still needed.
You invite us to collaborate with You and our
sisters and brothers
towards the day when Your kingdom is
complete
and poverty and injustice will be no more.

Lord in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Compassionate Christ,
we bring to You now people we would ask You
to bless,
those who are in need of your light and your
peace,
in moments of quiet we pray for them.
Silence

Lord in Your mercy
Hear our prayer

Gracious and loving God,
we ask all these prayers in the name of your
Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.
Amen.

**Final hymn STF 706 longing for
light, we wait in darkness**

Frodsham MC –
<https://youtu.be/MT-p828ugQQ>

my thanks go to all who have made this
service possible and we close by saying the
Grace together:

Blessing/the Grace

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, ever more
Amen.