



Written Worship for Sun 12th June 2022 Bible month Isaiah week 1 “Tough Love”

This is the first week of Bible month. This year we are gifted an opportunity to spend some time in the book of Isaiah – the longest of the books we have tackled in this way so far. As it is far too long to attempt to cover it all over four Sundays, our worship will take four of the ‘threads’ which run through the book as our themes.

This Sunday is also Trinity Sunday, and so we are particularly aware of the ways in which we know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Some have called the book of Isaiah ‘the fifth gospel’, holding within it as it does so much we need to encounter as we grow as God’s people.

Some of us have committed to read the whole of the book of Isaiah during June. If this is you, you may like to take a moment as you settle to worship to notice how that is going for you. Do you have a special place where you are jotting down anything which strikes you as you read day by day? If so, you might like to have it handy as we take a different approach together in worship today.

Pause for a moment now to be still with God...

God says:

“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

For I am the LORD your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour.”

(Is 43: 1b-3a)

Hymn: Sing of a God in majestic divinity (StF 13) OR Immortal, invisible, God only wise (StF 55, H&P 9, MP 327)

Let us pray...

Holy God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
we praise you for the might and the mystery of your being.

Amen.

We praise you for the uniqueness and the unity of your fellowship.

Amen.

We praise you for drawing us together and for setting us apart.

Amen.

We praise you in song, and in silence, in the mundane and in the mystical.

Amen.

God of truth, we bring to you our sorrow for our sins.

For seeking earthly absolutes and not eternal mysteries:

We are sorry.

For rooting ourselves in the finite and not nurturing the infinite within:

We are sorry.

For saying 'I' so much more than 'we', and for damaging relationships:

We are sorry.

Forgive us and strengthen us, we pray.

For we are sorry.

Living God, you choose

to turn towards, not away,

to show us your nature and not to hide.

You choose both mercy and justice.

You allow us to know you,

to love you and to serve you –

and for all these things, and so much more, we are thankful.

Amen.

As we pause for a moment before we come to our passage for today, we give thanks for the prophets, and for those who recorded and organised their words, copied texts and translated them so that we can read them today.

Hymn: Deep in the shadows of the past (StF 463; H&P 447)

Read: Isaiah 5: 1-10 (or the whole of chapter 5)

We pray...

Holy God, break your word among us as bread for our souls. Amen.

Reflect:

- What catches your attention as you read?
- What emotions do you detect in the passage?
- What connections, if any, come to mind from this passage to other parts of scripture, and especially into the gospels?

This passage is a tough read, particularly if you persist to the end of the chapter. Taken out of context, it may feel very bleak. But bible month is all about encountering scripture in context, and as we read through the book of Isaiah we discover that it holds both God's anger, God's warnings about the consequences of the people's actions, and also God's tenderness towards the people God loves. In chapter 5, the picture of the vineyard becomes a picture of God's people – land and identity are deeply entwined, recalling Deuteronomy chapter 28 in which we discover that failure to keep the covenant will ultimately lead to a loss of land. Elsewhere through the book of Isaiah, and in the work of other prophets though, we come to understand that often the prophets offer warnings

and threats of what will happen 'if'...if the people persist in pursuing a path of disobedience. But there is still opportunity for repentance...

Isaiah offers us a picture of a people who do not trust God, who are tempted to place their trust in other nations and their gods, who practice injustice, who offer worship to God in the context of violence and oppression. And alongside this, Isaiah offers us a picture of a God who cannot and will not ignore this way of being, and yet still offers love to God's people.

Reflect:

- What picture of God's people might a prophet like Isaiah offer today?
- What moves you to an anger which you might describe as 'righteous anger', anger which is prompted by injustice, and which moves you to seek change...
- What do we imagine might anger God in our time and place? You might want to focus your reflection on your own locality, or the city of Leeds, as well as, or instead of, taking a global view.

There is a temptation to think of justice and mercy as opposites, responses which must be chosen between. Isaiah shows us that in God, justice and mercy co-exist and both reflect God's eternal loving-kindness.

Read: Isaiah 58

Reflect:

- How will our engagement with the theme of 'tough love' prompt us to prayer, to change, to action this week?

Hymn: Praise to the God who clears the way (StF 183) OR God is Love: let heaven adore him (StF 103, H&P 36, MP 187)

Pray:

In faith we entrust to God the situations, places and people which are on our minds...

We bring to mind a person or situation which has made the news headlines this week...offering them to God...listening to see if God wants us to be active in the situation...

Your kingdom come, Your will be done

We bring to mind something which has concerned us in our local community this week... offering it to God...listening to see if God wants us to be active in the situation...

Your kingdom come, Your will be done

We bring to mind a situation where we sense 'tough love' is needed, or we see 'tough love' being offered... offering it to God...listening to see if God wants us to be active in the situation...

Your kingdom come, Your will be done

We bring to mind a person we know who needs to know that Gods loves them and that they can trust God... we offer them to God ...

Your kingdom come, Your will be done

We bring to mind a person we know who is ill, lonely, bereaved or suffering in some other way... we offer them to God ...

Your kingdom come, Your will be done

Finally we draw our thoughts and prayers together in the words that Jesus taught us...

As we say the **Lord's Prayer**, we remember our connectedness with all those who will pray this prayer today.

Which phrase of the Lord's Prayer is most helpful to pause with as we hold our reflections, our questions and our longings before God?

Hymn: Breathe on me, breath of God (StF 370, H&P 280, MP 67)

A sending from Isaiah chapter 6:

I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?'
And I said, 'Here I am; send me!'

Holy God, send us out into the world with your blessing,
for we ask in the name Jesus Christ,
in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

This prayer © ROOTS for Churches Ltd (www.rootsontheweb.com) 2002-2022. Reproduced with permission.