



Written Worship for Sun 3rd July 2022
Bible month Isaiah week 4 “A New World”

This is the final week of Bible month. If you have been reading your way through Isaiah this month, and you have a special place where you are jotting down anything which strikes you as you read day by day, you might like to have it to hand. If you are someone who enjoys being creative, you might also like to have some pens or coloured pencils, or even some collage materials, in your worship space.

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

God says:

“For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice for ever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.”

(Is 65: 17-19)

Hymn: Lord God, by whom all change is wrought (H&P 39) OR Eternal God, your love's tremendous glory (StF 3, MP 822)

Take a moment to think of all the words you can which you might use to talk about God, or to talk to God...the colours or images which are connected in your mind with the word 'God'. You might like to doodle them in a journal or on this sheet. You may choose to use some of these words or images to make your prayer of adoration today.

If you prefer, you can make this prayer your own...

Blessed are you, Lord our God:
in your love you create all things out of nothing
through your eternal Word
We glorify and adore you

Blessed are you, Lord our God:
in your love you redeemed the world
through our Lord Jesus Christ
We glorify and adore you

Blessed are you, Lord our God:
in your love you empower your people
through the gift of the Holy Spirit
We glorify and adore you
Amen

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We continue in prayer...

Holy God, we are Jesus' friends; we are people who you have trusted with the good news of your love. Knowing that you are with us always, we think about ourselves, our families, friends and the world you love...

We notice the things that are good and hopeful, and the things which make us feel sad or ashamed... the things which we are glad we have done this week, and the times we wish we had made a different choice...

Holy God, you are love.

You gift us the joys in our lives

Through Jesus our sins are forgiven.

We will live in the power of your Spirit today, and every day

Thank you God. Amen

Read: Isaiah 35

Read: Isaiah 65:17-25

We pray...

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

Reflect:

Throughout the book, Isaiah the prophet offers us pictures of 'what things will be like when...'. Chapter 35 is one such passage, drawing on images and experiences which would be familiar to a people living with the experience of desert, of wilderness, of the transformative effects of water where there has been none...who know what it's like to live with incurable and unsupported disability, who understand what it's like to feel unsafe when traveling...using all those familiar experiences to describe in vivid detail how things are changed in the light of the Glory of God.

Stop for a moment now and think...what creative images from our everyday lives might we use to describe the change we imagine might take place if everyone lived with the awareness of 'God with us'? What does a Leeds bathed in the glory of God look like, sound like, taste and smell and feel like to you? What would you see? What would you hear?

Can you write, draw or make something which represents Leeds as it might be, transformed in God's new creation?

Beyond that which we usually call 'sacred', there are lots of songs, poems and images which speak of something new, different, transformed; something which will offer people hope and possibility in times of hardship or oppression. Are there resources from the traditions most familiar to you which give a picture of 'a new world' beyond the pages of the bible and the hymn book?

Hymn: Freedom is coming (StF 697)

Reflect:

As we see so often as we encounter the prophets, we need to have multiple time horizons in view as we read Isaiah's words. Isaiah writes for the people of his time and place, knowing what it is to be exiles, to be oppressed, longing to participate in God's 'making new' in return and rebuilding. He writes for those looking towards the coming of God's Messiah...and he writes for us as we live in the light of Christ's coming, Jesus' promise to be with us always, and the hope of God's promised future. He uses the language of Exodus, of God bringing God's people out of oppression, and the language of creation and re-creation. Which image from Isaiah 65 touches you most deeply today? How will you hold Isaiah's hopeful vision in your heart as you walk with God in these next few days?

Advent themes never seem far from the surface as we reflect with Isaiah. As we come to pray today, we hold in our minds the 'now and not yet' paradox of God's kingdom. The 'faithful servant' towards whom Isaiah looked has dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, full of grace and truth. Christ is risen and ascended, the Holy Spirit breathes in all the earth. And yet, and yet, still there is fear, violence and injustice. Still we are filled with longing. Still we say 'come Lord Jesus'. Still we wait for the promised new heaven and new earth.

Hymn: O come, O come Immanuel (H&P 85, StF 180, MP 493)

As we imagine God promised new world, we recall our part in bringing God's new thing to birth as we pray a prayer first written for the end of refugee week...

We pray to you, Holy God, for the Church of Christ throughout the world,
that we shall be blessed by your grace,
and that all will be given strength to bear witness to the grace of God
in mission and ministry, worship and prayer.

We pray to you, Holy God, for all nations and all leaders,
that you will illuminate within and before them
the pathways made of justice, mercy and humility for all to walk,
and to build peace and healing.

We pray to you, Holy God, for all who need help and support today,
especially those we hold up before you, who we name now...
that your grace will be on them and that you will bless them.
And we pray for all those who provide care.

We pray to you, Holy God, for all who are far from home,

for prisoners, immigrants, exiles, refugees and all who seek sanctuary,
that you will be the shelter of their lives and souls.

Help us

to build communities of welcome, hospitality and sanctuary for all.

We pray to you, Holy God, that we may be sanctuary,
and be given the grace to follow Christ
and to practise his art of hospitality and welcome to the stranger.
Help us to love those who hate us
so that together we can make the world a better place.

We hold with thanks before you, Holy God,
those who have died for justice, for they have brought us new life,
and those whose memory is precious to us.

Grant them peace.

Give strength to all who are bereaved.

Bless all who mourn the loss of their homes and livelihoods.

And grant us wisdom and encouragement
from the vision, witness and example
of all the saints who have gone before us.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Prayer from 'Sanctuary: The hospitality of host, guest and stranger'
(Jayme Reaves & Inderjit Bhogal)

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 today as we hold our reflections, our questions and our longings
before God?

Our final hymn once again holds in tension the 'now and not yet' of God's reign

Hymn: Joy to the world (H&P 77, StF 330, MP 393)

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

"Behold, behold I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.
Behold, behold I make all things new,
my promise is true for I am Christ the way."

John Bell

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