

**Winchester, Eastleigh & Romsey Circuit
SERVICE AT HOME – Sunday 26th June 2022**

Prepared by the Revd Tim Searle

Preparation

As we prepare to worship God let us calm our minds and focus on God's presence with us, here and now. And as we offer our praise, may we also be ready to offer our lives as Christ's faithful servants today.

Call to Worship

Lord Jesus Christ,
suffering servant of all,
comforting counsellor of all,
liberating saviour of all,
and Prince of all peace,
receive our worship.

**And to you be glory and honour,
praise and thanksgiving,
this day and for evermore. Amen.**

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

From heaven you came, helpless babe (StF 272)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-lxT-2_jRg

From heaven you came, helpless babe,
entered our world, your glory veiled,
not to be served but to serve,
and give your life that we might live.

*This is our God, the Servant King,
he calls us now to follow him,
to bring our lives as a daily offering
of worship to the Servant King.*

There in the garden of tears
my heavy load he chose to bear;
his heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not my will but yours,' he said.

This is our God, the Servant King ...

Come see his hands and his feet,
the scars that speak of sacrifice,

hands that flung stars into space
to cruel nails surrendered.

This is our God, the Servant King ...

So let us learn how to serve
and in our lives enthrone him,
each other's needs to prefer,
for it is Christ we're serving
This is our God, the Servant King ...

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

Prayers of Approach and Confession

In peace let us pray to the Lord:

Lord Jesus Christ,
you had no interest in serving yourself,
only in serving others;
you did not desire your own glory,
only the glory of him who sent you;
and because of that
God has highly exalted you,
giving you the name that is above all names.

Teach us today the true nature
of what it is to worship and serve you.
And so help us to honour you as you desire,
through loving God with heart, mind and soul,
and loving our neighbour as ourselves.
So may we build your kingdom,
until you return in glory
and gather all things to yourself.

We keep silence as we come before God in our
own ways and with our own burdens ...

Forgive us, O God.
For the garments of our faith
wear thin with excuses;
frayed with neglect,
crumpled with forgetfulness
and torn with abuse.

Silence

Lord, forgive us.

Lord, save us.

Lord, hear us.

Silence

Hear the good news!

If anyone is in Christ,
there is a new creation:

everything old has passed away;
see, everything has become new!

Receive God's gift of forgiveness
and be at peace.

We bring all our prayers together by praying as
Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

Read Isaiah 9.2-7

Read Isaiah 61.1-7

Reflection

Some of us, in our worship and study, are currently following the Bible Month material on Isaiah. I hope you don't mind, but I've taken the liberty of veering away from the lectionary for this week's service at home so that we too can spend a bit of time with Isaiah.

Having recently led one of United's house groups on the material, I realise that Isaiah isn't the easiest book of the Bible to decipher, and every so often it feels as if you're walking through treacle. But I want to encourage you to stick with it because the book is, in fact, full of riches that can help deepen our faith, and deepen our understanding of God's saving work in Jesus.

Take a step back from the individual chapters and verses for a moment, and you begin to see the big picture that the prophet was trying to

convey. That amid all the bad news of their times, hope never faded, the ability of God through faithful servants to save the people never waned, and the dream of a peaceful kingdom was always possible. Today's world is very different from Isaiah's, but the problems are largely the same. And though we, like the people Isaiah was ministering to, are filled with the worries, anxieties, and frustrations of our age, we must not lose sight of hope, and we must get better at listening to the prophetic voices of our time! If only we'd listened to environmental activists 40-50 years ago, then maybe we might have avoided the biblical scale famine and floods that now befall our world.

A key theme, or 'motif' in Isaiah is the image of the 'Faithful Servant', thinking in particular about the *messianic* prophecies that run through the book of Isaiah, like the one you read a moment ago from Isaiah 9 which is usually reserved for Advent! It reminds me of how God's saving activity runs like a thread through the Bible, and I particularly liked Helen Paynter's imagery in this year's Bible Month material of prophecy as a stream running through the Old Testament, into the New (p.14). It begins with rivulets that merge into streams that flow into the torrent of hope that is Jesus Christ. And whether you believe that Isaiah's prophecies were speaking directly about Jesus or were talking about a series of 'messiahs' that led to the ultimate Suffering Servant, the result is just the same: that Jesus, Son of the Most High God, came to save us, and continues to be present with us today through the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, that saving work continues through us as we become the 'Faithful Servants' of Jesus. Though we may be more accustomed to Jesus' retelling of Isaiah 61, when he read out those words in the

Synagogue as recorded in Luke 4, the meaning is the same. That God in Christ came to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. And that God in Christ continues to pursue his manifesto to this day, through us.

So please don't give up on Isaiah but persevere in discovering the rhythm of this vital book. A rhythm that reminds us that whilst suffering indeed pervades, God's help is never far from our sides, and is all the closer when we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. And on the other side of that suffering is a state of peace and ease in which we may rest safe in the arms of God for a while before the next crisis presents itself.

Perhaps too, in that moment of peace comes a word of challenge from Jesus: 'what can you do to be my faithful servant and to deliver my manifesto?' And perhaps, though it might take a thousand years, when enough people have answered that challenge and become Jesus' faithful servants in their corners of the world, then God's peaceful kingdom will have arrived. In this kingdom, swords will have been turned into ploughshares (Isa 2.4), the wolf shall live with the lamb, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. (Isa 11.6) Your kingdom come! Your will be done! Amen!

A Prayer of Commitment

As we worship you this day, Lord Jesus,
and celebrate the coming kingdom
of freedom, peace and justice,
so we lay our lives before you
as a sign of our commitment to be
your faithful servants in the world.
Your vision is our vision.
Your kingdom is our kingdom.
Your call is our call.

Your journey is our journey.

Your life is our life.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Come, Holy Spirit!

May our hearts be ablaze for you. Amen!

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Almighty and everlasting God,
we give you thanks, above all else,
for the gift of your son, Jesus,
our Lord, and our saviour.
Help us to incline our ears to him,
to keep our eyes fixed upon him,
and to walk by his side our whole lives long.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful God,
we have broken the world which you created
to be a place of peace and harmony.
We are truly sorry.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the downtrodden of our society:
those who know nothing of love or security,
those who have no one to love,
and no place to call their own.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who live in our communities:
those who came out of choice,
and those who came seeking refuge.
We pray for the many who look at shop
windows showing goods they cannot afford,
and those who can afford them with ease.
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in authority:
for the government, and those elected to
positions of civic leadership,
for those who lead our churches
and our circuit.

Bless them with wisdom,
with sensitivity and understanding,
that they may know how to serve all,
and respond to the challenges we face with
love and grace.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ,
you entered the world
in both its pain, and its joy.
You did so to celebrate the glory of God,
and to conquer by love
all the forces that demean humankind.
So enter, once again, this world
through your Church.
Enter our hearts
through your Spirit.
**Hear our prayers,
and by your power transform us.
For Jesus' sake. Amen.**

Listen, Read, Pray or Sing Along

God has spoken – by his prophets (StF 157)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoPiKqKTmbg>

God has spoken – by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging word;
each from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holding fast;
God eternal reigns forever,
God the first, and God the last.

God has spoken – by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time was born;
Light from Light, to earth descending,
Christ, revealing God to all.

God is speaking – by the Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then.
Through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith is standing fast;
God still speaks, the Word unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.

George Wallace Briggs (1875-1959)

Blessing

May the blessing of God,
who resides in our hopes and our dreams,
grant us peace.
May the blessing of Jesus,
whose Word leads us and guides us,
grant us peace.
May the blessing of the Spirit,
who enables us to live as God's people,
grant us peace, now, and always.
Amen.

* * * * *

Church Copyright Licence No 30794