

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit**  
**Service at Home Sheet 12<sup>th</sup> January 2025**  
**The Chosen One - Isaiah 42**  
**Prepared by Pat Fry**

**Introduction.**

I had to start preparing this service while I was away staying with family during the Christmas school holidays. I knew the set Gospel for today would be the baptism of Jesus, but I wasn't getting very far. I thought I would look online to find out what the other readings were, but to my surprise this was not available on the Methodist Connexion website, so, instead, I tried the URC. There I found notes for preachers for the next few Sundays, and to my great delight, the Old Testament lesson chosen for this Sunday was one of my favourite passages from Isaiah. (Actually it is not our set lesson for this Sunday, but will be this time next year!) Not only that, Revd Tim Searle had highlighted this passage in our carol service on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December, so in preparing this I am indebted to both Revd. Andy Braunston and Revd Tim Searle for their deepening my understanding of a much-loved passage.

**Call to worship**

Gracious God, As we come to worship, we want to hear your word to each of us. In our best moments we believe you do speak to us, O God, through ancient words and contemporary interpretation, in the majesty of creation, in the everyday experiences of our lives, and through the people we meet. So in this time, may we be open to receive from you, so that your light may shine in our hearts and lives, and that as we hear, we may follow. Amen\*

Our first hymn is a Methodist classic, celebrating Jesus' coming to earth.

**Hymn StF208 Let earth and heaven combine**

<https://youtu.be/WyoSU3UT3IM>

Let earth and heaven combine  
angels and all agree,  
to praise in songs divine  
the Incarnate Deity,  
our God contracted to a span,  
incomprehensibly made man.

He laid his glory by,  
he wrapped him in our clay;  
unmarked by human eye  
the latent Godhead lay  
infant of days he here became,  
and bore the mild Immanuel's name.

Unsearchable the love  
that has our Saviour brought;  
the grace is far above  
both earth and angels' thought:  
suffice for us that God, we know,  
our God is manifest below.

He deigns in flesh to appear  
widest extremes to join;  
to bring our vileness near,  
and make us all divine;  
and we the life of God shall know  
for God is manifest below .

Made perfect first in love,  
and sanctified by grace  
we shall from earth remove,  
and see his glorious face:  
his love shall then be fully showed  
and we shall all be lost in God.

Charles Wesley 1707-1788

**Prayers of Praise and Confession**

Gracious God, as we move on from the Christmas season into a time of year when the weather often limits what we can do, and we easily become down-hearted, help us to hold on to the sense of wonder that the Christmas story gave us.

We sang our carols giving thanks for the gift of Jesus as a baby. Now we turn our attention to Jesus' adult life. And that too leaves us awe-struck.

We bring our thanks and praise for all that Jesus taught about the deepest truths of human life;

We bring our thanks and praise that he demonstrated what a God-filled human life could be.

We bring our thanks and praise for his death and resurrection, and all that means for us now.

But we confess we often get bogged down in the everyday, and lose out hold on these precious truths.

So we look back over the last few days, giving thanks for what has been good, and admitting where we have gone wrong, where we have failed to live as your people

As we confess our weaknesses, our wrong actions, our failure to see what we should do, we ask your forgiveness and your help to walk more faithfully in the way of Jesus.

Thank You for the promise of forgiveness and the help of the Holy Spirit as we seek to follow Jesus' way where we are today.

May our gratitude inspire how we live each and every day. Amen.

### **Old Testament Lesson Isaiah 42: 1-9**

#### **Reflection**

This has been a passage I have treasured for a very long time.

It was the passage I chose to talk about at a shoppers' service when I was just beginning to consider the (unlikely) possibility of local preaching. The picture it paints of the Lord's Chosen speaks to our deepest needs. He will not give up until justice is established in the whole earth, yet he will achieve this compassionately. It will not be through warfare or dictatorship, or

power politics, like so many famous leaders, but quietly, tenderly.

"The bruised and broken reed he shall not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench" are words of reassurance that give us each hope in the dark times of our experience. Take time to ponder them, and hold on to them. Perhaps to recall a time when you were feeling very low, and needed to hear words of reassurance, that God does indeed care for you even in your weakest moments, and then to give thanks for anyone who helped you through that time, who was in a very real sense, God' gift to you

And if right now is a difficult time, let these words of Scripture embed themselves in your deepest thinking.

Surely it is a prophecy about the nature of Jesus?

One of the most intriguing and amazing things about the book of Isaiah is that these prophecies were written in difficult times, to speak to the needs of a particular people in those time, and yet they clearly contain truths for all people for all time, truths about a Saviour beyond Isaiah's imagining.

This passage was written for people in Exile. Jerusalem had been captured and destroyed, the Jewish people taken away to Babylon. Their nation was a bruised and broken reed, their culture, their faith, a dimly burning wick, so these were words of comfort to them, reassurance that God has not abandoned them. They were still God's chosen people, and this terrible disaster was not God's final word. There was still hope, God's care was still there in spite of all that they were enduring. They had not lost their identity.

But there are words of challenge as well as comfort. If the chosen one is called to "be a light to the nations".... "to bring out from the prison those who sit in darkness", are the Chosen people not also called to in this way? A lesson

that needs to be recalled again and again throughout history,

So we come to our

### **New Testament Lesson: Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22**

#### **Hymn StF 233 When Jesus came to Jordan**

<https://youtu.be/koQKCFXkrKE>

When Jesus came to Jordan  
to be baptised by John,  
He did not come for pardon  
but as his Father's Son.  
He came to share repentance  
with all who mourn their sins,  
to speak the vital sentence  
with which new life begins.

He came to share temptation,  
our utmost woe and loss,  
for us and our salvation  
to die upon the cross.  
So when the Dove descended  
on him, the Son of Man,  
the hidden years had ended,  
the age of grace began.

Come Holy Spirit aid us,  
to keep the vows we make;  
this very day invade us  
and every bondage break.  
Come give our lives direction ,  
the gift we covet most:  
to share the resurrection  
that leads to Pentecost.

Fred Pratt Green 1903-2000

#### **Reflection**

This is quite a puzzling story. In Matthew's Gospel we read that John himself was puzzled – surely it was he who should seek forgiveness and baptism from the Messiah? But Jesus makes it very clear, He is here, a human being, showing his commitment to the way of God in the same way as the people around him; He clearly identifies himself with the people among whom he lived, and demonstrates his own

commitment to the new thing God is beginning to do in a way they would understand.

At Jesus baptism, when the Spirit of God is seen descending like a dove, the voice from heaven says “ You are my Son, my beloved, with you I am well pleased.” Words that make very clear to Jesus that yes, he is indeed God' s son and yes this is the path God his Father wants him to take.

And there is more to it. The words are very similar to the opening words of Old Testament reading.

As Jesus withdrew to the wilderness to decide his way forward, perhaps those words stayed with him; he knew the Scriptures well, so did this passage from Isaiah help him in deciding how to carry out his divine mission?

We know from the familiar story of the Temptations, that He rejected joining the popular demand for rebellion against Rome – even though Roman power a by-word for oppression and cruelty. Power politics was not his way. We know He rejected using miraculous power to take centre stage by spectacular feats, to achieve celebrity, a cult of personality . Sensationalism was not his way. Instead he chose the way of suffering love, inviting people to follow his way, continuing in steadfast love in spite of rejection, misunderstanding and betrayal – the way of the Cross, the way that led to resurrection and the giving of the Spirit to his followers.

If the picture of the Chosen One is a picture of Jesus, it must also be an inspiration to his church. If w are called to be the body of Christ, then this is our calling too; to nurture those who feel themselves to be bruised and broken reeds, to avoid quenching the spark of God, the spark of faith in people who are finding life tough, and to persevere, holding on to a vision of justice throughout the earth, and doing what we can to work towards that vision becoming reality.

### **Prayer of response**

Loving God, thank you for the gifts you shower up on us, enabling us to give of ourselves, whether through money, time, prayer, sensitivity to people around us, or appreciation of their kindness to us,

Help us to remember that giving changes us – helping us control our selfish desires.

Help us to remember that giving reminds us that we are Yours.

Help us to remember the difference that our giving makes to the lives of others.

We ask your blessing on all that we give, in whatever way, so that we may continue as Your people and, as we are changed, may play our part in changing the world. Amen

### **Prayer for others**

There are so many people in our world who feel bruised and broken by their life experiences.

And its hard to know where to begin, as we think of the troubles in our world.

So take time now to bring before God one issue from the news stirs you to compassion, and pray that something of the light of God may be found in that situation.

Then come closer to home, and think of one charity working locally to support people facing difficulties. Pray for the volunteers and professionals involved in this work, asking that they may find both strength and sensitivity to do their work well.

Then bring before God people you know personally going through difficult times, and pray for wisdom for yourself as you try to support them in any way you can

Gracious God, We pray that your life giving presence may be known in some way in all the situations we have prayed for; we pray that we too may know the light of your presence in our everyday experience. We bring our prayers trusting in the promises of Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

The Lord's prayer. As you say these familiar words, remember that you are joining with millions of other throughout the world, speaking

in many different languages who know and love these words .

**Hymn** (Methodist Hymns Old and New 389)  
**Jesus in your life we see you** tune Blaenwern  
not available on youtube

Jesus in your life we see you  
making God's compassion known.  
"Surely you have borne our sorrows,  
surely made our pain your own!  
See your touch bring hope and healing,  
see your word set captives free,  
see you suffer, mocked, rejected ,  
dying on the shameful tree.

Risen Lord, you reign in glory,  
but your wounded hands still show  
you can share the outcast's torment,  
sound the depth of human woe,  
know where greed exploits the helpless,  
hear the addict's lonely cry,  
grieve at so much waste and heartbreak,  
feel for all who question "Why?"

Risen Lord you bear their sorrow,  
know how much they need your peace;  
as you once healed broken bodies,  
offered captive souls release,  
take us, use us, in your service,  
we would follow where you lead:  
only your divine compassion  
meets the depths of human need.

(Basil Bridge b.1927)

As you say the words of the Grace, hold in your mind the people of your church community, your family and friends.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore, Amen.

\*Call to worship adapted from Notes for Sunday Worship. Revd. Andy Braunston, United Reformed Church

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