

ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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13 September 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Isaiah 53

Great Texts of the Bible #6
We all, like sheep, had gone astray

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Benediction



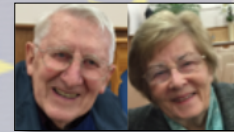
NOTICES

13 September 2020

Wednesday 16 September 1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer
Sunday 20 September 11 am Great Texts of the Bible #7.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member:
Will and Joan RENSHAW.



and

Laszlo & Eva

MIHALYL are located in Hungary where they minister with the Hungarian Reformed Presbyterian Church.



MEMBERS who wish to continue their freewill offerings may use the banking details at the bottom of this page or post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat Vic 3555.

GARDENIA ST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
53 Gardenia Street,
Blackburn 3130

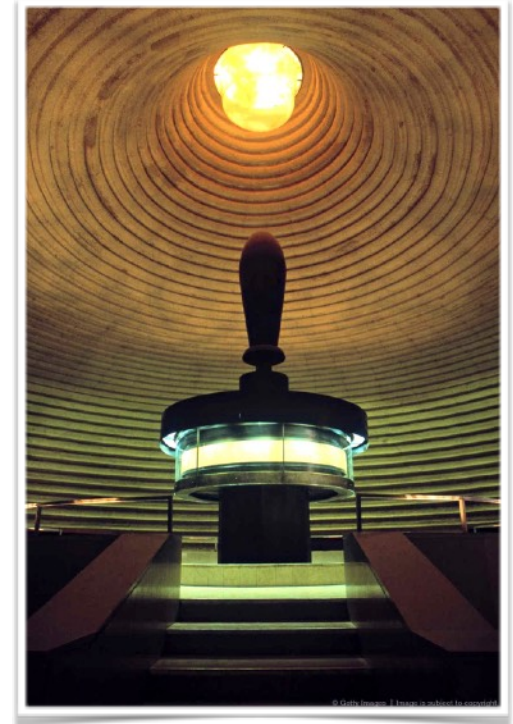


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Account name: Blackburn Presbyterian Church
BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

13 September 2020



Great Isaiah Scroll

Display in the Shrine of the Book,
Israel Museum, Jerusalem

WELCOME



The authorities intensified their crackdown on the right to freedom of expression. Enforced disappearances remained pervasive, with no one held accountable for them. The government failed to uphold its commitments to legislate against torture and enforced disappearances. Violence against women and girls remained widespread. Parliament blocked attempts to restrict child marriage. Religious minorities continued to be persecuted under blasphemy laws and attacked by non-state actors.

Amnesty International 2019

Asia Bibi's case prompted international condemnation of Pakistan's anti-blasphemy laws but there are still dozens of Christians and others on death row for blasphemy. Meanwhile, several churches and Christian colonies have been attacked by Islamists in recent years, leading to the loss of many lives. Although Christians are around 2% of the population, they make up about 80% of the workforce dealing with waste management (sewerage and street-cleaning).

World Watch Monitor July 2020

Following Jesus is extremely difficult in Pakistan. Christians are considered second-class citizens and are discriminated against in many aspects of life. Converts face violent persecution from their community and extremist groups; many believers live in poverty as a result of their social standing.

Converting to Christianity is dangerous. Those wishing to leave Islam and follow Jesus are often threatened by their family or community. Their new faith is viewed as shameful. Churches are regularly monitored and subject to frequent attacks.

Christians in Pakistan face discrimination in work and education, and jobs that are considered 'unclean' are officially reserved for Christians. The blasphemy law means Christians may lose their jobs, social standing, or even their lives for speaking about their faith in Jesus.

Open Doors 2020

Great Texts of the Bible #6 Isaiah 53

Sermon
Notes

Treasured among the scrolls found in the caves of Qumran is the Great Scroll of Isaiah. Today it is the centrepiece of the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. It has been digitised so that anyone can read the text online.

This Great Isaiah Scroll dates from around 100 BC and is older by 1000 years than the next oldest copy. When the scrolls were displayed in Edinburgh the point was made that in the 1000 years of transmission from 100 BC to 900 AD the scroll had been copied many times, but variations and errors in copying were virtually negligible.

The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah was a passage that so captured my attention as a teenager that I learned it off-by-heart. As I have learned more of Isaiah I have been drawn deeper into the whole of the Bible's message, from Christmas and Covenant to Calvary and a whole new Creation, Isaiah connects with the whole of Scripture. Today we will explore four key ideas why this is so.

1 The Royal Servant. Well tuned ears will hear readings from Isaiah at Christmas.

A child is born to us! A son is given to us!
And he will be our ruler.

The reference is to Isaiah 9 verses 6 and 7 which describe a descendant of David, a future king who will usher in a whole new era of justice and peace. But who is the king? The Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father and Prince of Peace? He is *Immanuel*. Chapters 6-12 climax with his salvation song.

All this to a people deserving judgement. A people who do not recognise their covenant LORD (1:2,3) and who, like a cherished vineyard, nevertheless disappointed, producing sour grapes (5:1-7).

In his reign swords will be hammered into ploughs and spears will be made pruning hooks - a passage from Isaiah 2 is memorialised in sculpture at the United Nations Building in NYC.

2 The Prophetic Servant. The prophet speaks warnings of a day of judgement (17:4,7). To the nations, but also to Israel.

Israel had forgotten her God (17:10) and embraced the idolatry of the surrounding nations.

Judgement will be real and catastrophic, but the LORD is the only refuge. Chapter 25 and 26 invite us to keep hope and faith alive in the darkest times.

3 The Suffering Servant. In the great central section of Isaiah (Chapters 40-55) we have one long sustained poem. It invites comfort and hope. Now famously in Handel's Messiah "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people" (40:1)

In this long section a royal figure emerges, sometimes as Israel, sometimes as the Servant of the LORD. NT Wright notes:

Is he 'Israel' itself? In a sense yes; he is given that name. But in a sense no: as the picture develops in chapter 49 and 50, the 'servant' appears to stand over against the people, doing for them what they cannot do for themselves.

Isaiah 53 in *The Message*, Eugene Peterson's translation begins, 'Who would have thought God's saving power would look like this?' Nobody. Read the chapter. Can you see the Saviour here? Or sense Easter? We know from the Gospels that it formed Jesus' sense of mission. The LORD's servant is abused and killed.

His death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness. He bore their iniquities (53:10-12).

Yet "he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied".

The strange work of the LORD's servant in dying and rising is honoured with a renewal of covenant promises "Your Creator will be like a husband to you... my love for you will never end" (54:5-10). There is an invitation to everyone to come and drink freely, come and have life, "the nations will come running to join you" (55:5).

4 The Servant King. How is the rule of the servant King displayed? Arise and shine! Your light has come (60:1)

Paul ends his great chapter on the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:58) "In the Lord, as you know, the work you're doing will not be worthless." Everything done in the King's service will find its place in God's new creation.

"What we do in Christ and by the Spirit in the present is not wasted. It will last and be enhanced in God's new world" (NTW). You in your small corner, and I in mine.