

ORDER OF SERVICE

Sunday 9 October 2022

Doxology 235
Now to the King

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn 420
Lord of all hopefulness

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Welcome and Notices
Mr Keith Ferres, Session Clerk

Offering and Dedication

Hymn 523
Jesus, the very thought of You

Readings: Isaiah 55:1-12
Ian Rutherford

Servant Song Series #8
You are invited!
Isaiah 55:1

Prayer of Intercession and
The Lord's Prayer

Hymn 412
I am not skilled to understand

Benediction

All hymns today are from the Rejoice! hymnal



NOTICES

9 OCTOBER 2022

Monday 12 October
Sunday 16 October

1.30 pm Prayer Meeting.
11 am Morning Worship
Servant Series #9 - Isaiah 61

For your prayers this week



Congregational members:
Sonya and Ian RUTHERFURD

and



Joy HILL is with Pioneers and is now Australia based with an Oceania focus.

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GARDENIA ST.
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
BLACKBURN

9 October 2022

Hey there! All who
are thirsty, come to
the water!

Isaiah 55:1



WELCOME

You are Invited!

Our study today brings us to the great invitation which ends Isaiah's great poem.

From chapters 40-55 we have highlighted the enigmatic 'servant of the Lord' figure and discovered key aspects of his life, teaching and his death.

Now we find out what it means for us all. Let's think about four ideas:

1. Babylon's supermarket.

The temples of Babylon were awe inspiring to the captive Jews. So many gods to choose. A god for every purpose under heaven; power, fertility, beauty, fortune, success, health, security, the list was as endless as the aspirations of the human heart.

Tim Kellers suggests an idol is 'anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.' More subtly expressed, Babylon's gods are with us still.

Why labour for gods that don't deliver? They cannot satisfy the soul. The prophet's hearers are challenged to reject the junk food of idolatry and enjoy fine dining at YHWH's table. He alone satisfies.

2. the good news poem

From the outset of the poem (Isaiah 40) we have the promise of comfort and good news (gospel).

The 'sure mercies of David' and 'covenant love' remind us God had not forgotten his people.

His purpose is 'blessing' (55:3,4, cf Genesis 12:3). This covenant vocabulary takes us again into the Bible's great theme: the covenant love of God.

Now, today, this moment

Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in disguise and starting a sort of secret society to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force, invading it? Is it that He is not strong enough? Well, Christians think He is going to land in force; we do not know when. But we can guess why He is delaying. He wants to give us the chance of joining His side freely. ... I wonder whether people who ask God to interfere openly and directly in our world quite realise what it will be like when He does. When that happens, it is the end of the world. When the author walks on to the stage the play is over. God is going to invade, all right: but what is the good of saying you are on His side then, when you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else—something it never entered your head to conceive—comes crashing in; something so beautiful to some of us and so terrible to others that none of us will have any choice left? ... There is no use saying you choose to lie down when it has become impossible to stand up. That will not be the time for choosing; it will be the time when we discover which side we really have chosen, whether we realised it before or not. Now, today, this moment, is our chance to choose the right side. God is holding back to give us that chance. It will not last forever. We must take it or leave it.

From *The Weight of Glory*.
A sermon by CS Lewis

The Lord alone, who in his servant has truly loved us, offers to us the joy of the forgiven.

God's love, pledged to Abraham, Moses and David is now to be manifest in the Lord's servant' (See the first 'song' Isaiah 42:6).

To Christians the servant songs lay bare unmistakably the psychological and emotional journey of Jesus, YHWH's servant. Jesus offered himself to bring forgiveness, upholding both God's justice and mercy.

3. snow, rain and change

Like snow and rain, which bring the seasonal changes to the earth, God's word too will bring about change.

God's invitation comes to every one of us. Not just to Jews, but also to the nations.

We are urgently challenged to change our way of thinking. To turn from idols. To *return* to God. Do this today! Now! Now is the only time. Pray to him. (55:1,6)

4. hills sing, trees applaud

Hebrew poetry doesn't look for rhyme or rhythm so much as parallel (or contrasting) ideas. So, what do singing hills and applauding trees suggest? They capture the idea of joy! (v.12)

These closing images of the poem encourage us to a lived experience of delight and flourishing.



All parties to the armed conflict committed serious human rights violations and abuses, including extrajudicial executions and sexual violence against women and girls, and millions of people were internally displaced. Humanitarian aid was denied to millions of people in Tigray. Ethnic violence claimed at least 1,500 lives. Police carried out arbitrary arrests and detentions in the context of the state of emergency.

Amnesty International 21/22

Christians in Ethiopia face persecution from all directions. Extremist groups attack churches. Families and communities pressure converts. Authorities discriminate against certain denominations.

Political violence in the country, especially in Tigray, has taken its toll on Christian communities, with many Christians killed and churches destroyed.

Because of the government's special relationship with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, other denominations are persecuted by both the state and Orthodox Christians. Believers who switch denominations and leave the Orthodox Church can face significant mistreatment.

Local officials may oppose the growth of the Protestant church and refuse permits for meetings and worship. Christians living in areas with strong presence of extremist groups are particularly vulnerable to violence.

Open Doors 2022