

Trinity 5 – 12th July 2020

12 th July Trinity 5	Holy Communion with suggested hymns for use at home.	Isaiah 55 vv 1-13 p742 Romans 8 vv 1-11 p1134 Matthew 13 vv 1-23 p978	MP 187 Praise My Soul 60 Freely, Freely Psalm 65 249 Turn Your Eyes 149 Love Divine 281 You Shall Go Out
------------------------------------	--	---	--

GRANT, O Lord, we beseech thee, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by thy governance, that thy Church may joyfully serve thee in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

I'm feeling rather chuffed today because we're having two of my four favourite chapters from the Bible – Isaiah 55 & Romans 8. I only need the rest of Romans 8 and John 17 & I Corinthians 13 to make my cup run over. So, this morning's sermon will be a study of Isaiah 55.

1Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

These days of COVID 19 have made us think. We've perhaps had more time to think than we usually do. We're facing a great challenge, maybe a reminder of our own mortality. What's really important in life? What really matters? Do we devote our time and energy to the things that really matter or do we fret unnecessarily about things that don't, in the end, matter very much at all? In the parable Jesus told in the Gospel, three kinds of people missed out on what really matters: those who paid no attention to the Word; those who started off all right, but gave up when trouble came along; and those who were so tied up with the affairs of this passing age that they lost their focus on God the eternal. You can gain the whole world and still lose your own soul. It was only those who paid attention to the Word and acted on it who bore fruit that would last. What is the fruit which faithful Christians bear? It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit: *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

3Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. 4Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Listen to God, listen to His Word. If the Word of God is truly the seed sown in our hearts, then we obey that Word. We are not merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. And what does the Word say? Love. Love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself. The covenant is, *You will be my people and I will be your God. You shall be holy because I am holy.* The promises to King David are fulfilled in *great David's greater Son*, Jesus. S Paul speaks of the *sure mercies of David* as the promise of the resurrection to eternal life – His and ours.

5Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

This good news is not for the people of Israel alone. God gave Israel the Law and the Prophets. He sent them the Messiah. Israel is richly blessed, but the promise to Abraham is,

In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The seed of Abraham is the Son of David, God's salvation, a light to lighten the Gentiles (all the nations) and the glory of God's people Israel.

6Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Let's take the opportunity to seek the LORD while we have it. The imperative is to preach this Gospel of repentance and forgiveness to the nations while there is yet time. There may come a time when it is too late. Now is always the time to respond to the love of God.

8For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The thrice holy God is infinitely greater than sinful human beings. His ways are beyond our comprehension. Yet if we return to Him, we are adopted into His family. This is the invitation we have for ourselves and to share with the people we love and with the whole world. If we put our trust in Him, He gives us His Holy Spirit, by Whom we know that God is our Father. As S Paul says in Romans 8, the Spirit sets us free from guilt and sin and fear. Filled with His Holy Spirit, as children of God, our calling is to live as His family, through the grace of the Holy Spirit to be people of love, for *God is love*.

10For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God's Word accomplishes God's purposes without fail, but what is this Word of God? It is the Word by which He creates and sustains the universe, heaven and earth. It is the Word He speaks to and through Moses and the Prophets and other wise and holy people. It is the Word of Scripture, the Bible. It is the voice of conscience, the Holy Spirit speaking to us in prayer and in so many ways. It is the Word the Church is commissioned to believe, to hold fast, to cherish and to preach to the world. Above all, the Word of God is Jesus, the Word made flesh.

12For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. 13Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

The original context of Isaiah's prophecy is that the Jews are going home to the Holy Land. After decades in exile in Babylon (Iraq), they are going home, through the arid wastes, over the mountains, through the valleys, across the rivers. The LORD is preparing the way for them. The LORD is bringing them home. And how do we read these words as Christians? What is their eternal significance for the people of all nations as they turn to Christ? He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The home to which He brings us home is His Father's house where there are many mansions and He has gone to prepare a place for us. It is not inappropriate that we sometimes sing the chorus based on v12 at funerals. In fact, my mother chose it for her own and I shouldn't be surprised if we had it at mine. *For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace.* Hallelujah!