

HARVEST SERVICE
19TH SEPTEMBER 2021
THE REPAIR SHOP (6) COME TO THE WATERS
ISAIAH 55:1-13

WELCOME & NOTICES

Church meeting next Sunday 26 September
Church Council on Monday 27 September

CALL TO WORSHIP

My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of
foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you
(Psalm 63:5)

OPENING SONG: We plough the fields and scatter

**We plough the fields and scatter
the good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand;
He sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.**

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,
for all His love.*

He only is the Maker
of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey Him,
by Him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, His children,
He gives our daily bread.

All good gifts around us...

We thank Thee, then, O Father,
for all things bright and good;
The seedtime and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
No gifts have we to offer
for all Thy love imparts,
But that which Thou desirest,
our humble, thankful hearts.

All good gifts around us...

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Praise you, Lord!
How good and right it is, to give you thanks,
O Lord our God.

The sights and scents of harvest
remind us of the wonder of growth.
Rain and sunshine combine
to bring the best from your creation.
Here, in harvest fruitfulness,
shine all the colours of the rainbow.
Your promise never fails.
Creation tells the everlasting story
of your goodness towards us.
We praise you, Lord, God of creation.

In a world whose web of life is intricate and
beautiful,
save us, Lord, from carelessness and blindness.
In a world whose creatures are so varied and
vulnerable,
save us, Lord, from cruelty and destruction.
In a world whose waters are fresh
and whose oceans should cleanse,
save us, Lord from wanton pollution.
In a world whose forests protect our air and
wildlife,
**save us, Lord, from the systems that drive us
to destroy them.**
In a world whose harvest is rich and plentiful,
save us, Lord, from waste and greed.
In a world where many people live on little or
nothing,
**save us, Lord, from inactivity and hard-
heartedness.**
Lord, forgive us all our sins,
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God in his mercy forgives all who truly repent. So,
receive his forgiveness in Jesus' name and rejoice
in his goodness to you. **Amen.**

CHRISTIAN AID VIDEO (1.14)

<https://youtu.be/xa4jC5AeAZo>

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OFFERING OF HARVEST GIFTS

Food to Connecting Bowthorpe
Money to Christian Aid

HARVEST OFFERTORY PRAYER

Lord of the harvest, giver of all good gifts, we offer these gifts for your work through Connecting Bowthorpe and Christian Aid. Bless their work here in Bowthorpe and in the wider world. We not only give our gifts but also give ourselves to you this harvest day, in thankfulness of your goodness to us in Christ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG: WE SEE THE FRUITFUL HARVEST

<https://youtu.be/GZ27o69vQN4>

**We see the fruitful harvest
our gracious God provides
and how, in his abundance,
our needs are satisfied.
He sends the yearly seasons,
And feeds with joy and care;
Pure light and living water
poured out for all to share.**

*Lord of all the harvest,
Creation brings you praise,
So we will join the joyful song
Of everything you've made.*

**This world of revelation
Unfolds before our eyes
The birds sing out God's glories,
His wisdom fills the skies.
The seeds are sown to teach us
Of death that leads to life.
The fruitful trees remind us
To live each day in Christ.**

*Lord of all the harvest,
Creation brings you praise,
So we will join the joyful song
Of everything you've made.*

**There is another harvest
The workers are so few**

**We'll tend the seeds he's planted
And see his word bear fruit.
Creation groans in longing
For earth to be restored,
That day of celebration:
The harvest of the Lord.**

*Lord of all the harvest,
Creation brings you praise,
So we will join the joyful song
Of everything you've made.*

READING: ISAIAH 55:1-13

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. ²Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. ³Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. ⁴See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. ⁵Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendour."

⁶Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. ⁷Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. ⁹"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish

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what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

¹²You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. ¹³Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

HARVEST REFLECTION:

THE REPAIR SHOP (6) Come to the waters

These past six weeks we have been journeying in Isaiah 40-55. Next week we will end the series and go back to Isaiah 50 for a final consideration of the messages the LORD wanted to give to his people in Babylonian exile 2500 years ago. These messages strengthened and helped prepare the exiles for their return to Jerusalem. They were being called to leave the captivity and the comforts of Babylon. In every generation since Isaiah gave the LORD's message to the exiles, God's people have listened to the prophet's messages and found in them hope, inspiration and strength in troubled times, which is why we have been turning to these passages these past few weeks.

1. GOD HIMSELF GIVES THE INVITATION TO COME

And so we begin with an invitation. 'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!' (v1). Firstly, there is an echo of words in Proverbs 9:5 which says, "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed." In Proverbs it is Wisdom who lays the table, sets the feast and issues the invitation, but in Isaiah we find this turned into a deeper invitation. For it is not Wisdom personified speaking but Almighty God who speaks, the one who provides food and water to the hungry and thirsty. After all the pain, trouble and despair of

exile, all the guilt of their failure to walk in God's ways, not to mention the doubt in God's eternal plan, despite all this God is now drawing them to himself once again. God comes to them and us in a place where we can meet together. It's not quite the same as before. Times have changed and we have changed, but God is still God, and God is still drawing us near to him. 'Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live' (v3).

2. THE INVITATION IS TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOTHING

Secondly, the invitation is given to those who have nothing, people who have come to the end of themselves, who are empty. As Jesus put it, 'those who are poor in spirit' (Matt. 5:3). 'Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!' (v1). The invitation comes to those who not only know their need for God but also know they have nothing to bring in return.

When the Anglican curate John Newton wrote the words of a new hymn 'Amazing grace', he wrote them to illustrate a sermon that we come to God with nothing. Over 250 years since John Newton first wrote this hymn, Newton's words echo this theme in Isaiah 55, that we come with nothing.

'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.'

In Isaiah 55, God Almighty comes to us, spreading a table before us of good things, and invites us to come and eat and drink without money and without price. Anyone can come. Anyone can accept the invitation. Have you accepted the invitation to come to the LORD?

Firstly, we are invited to come by the LORD and come to the LORD. Secondly, the invitation comes to those who have nothing, who are empty.

3. GOD HIMSELF IS OUR FOOD

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Thirdly, the profound difference between this passage and the Proverbs passage I quoted a few moments ago is that here in Isaiah God himself is our food. He is the one who sustains us with himself. That is why it says, "Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near" (v6). We are invited to a dinner. Have you ever been invited to a dinner? This past Wednesday I was invited to have dinner with the senior staff of the Diocese, along with lots of others! But I was invited nonetheless. It cost me nothing. I was a guest. The invitation here in Isaiah 55 is for all who are weary and in need of God, and the food is the person who invites us – the LORD himself. He is the true bread, he is the one who satisfies, the one who gives life. Of course, with such words we think of Jesus himself who said, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty" (John 6:35), and he also said, "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). God himself is our food to sustain us for life.

God draws us near to him and reminds us that he is the living God whose thoughts and ways are not like ours but infinitely higher (v8-9). He is the living God whose word will accomplish all he desires and will achieve the purpose for which he sent it (v11). The way we draw near to God is to listen to his word, the word by which he made heaven and earth, the word by which the prophets spoke, the word by which he came into the world and became one of us in Jesus, God's living word. The invitation comes to return to him as we come towards the end our own exile, the pandemic. We didn't have a seventy year wait like the exiles, but we have had life disrupted and changed.

4. GO OUT AND GIVE

But there is another side of this invitation to come to the LORD and be fed by him. For those who know God we don't just come and receive. We then go out and give. "You shall go out with joy, and be led forth in peace; and the mountains and

the hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands" (v12). Even creation rejoices when God's people go back into the world having been with the maker of heaven and earth.

We come to be nourished, and then go to feed others through our service to the world. Mark's gospel tells us, "Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve - designating them apostles - that they might be with him and that he might send them out" (Mark 3:13-14). To be with him and to be sent out. This is the rhythm at the heart of the Christian faith. This is the life to which we are called. It is the life of loving God and then loving our neighbour.

This harvest we come to celebrate all God has given us, to celebrate the giver of all good gifts, and we give our money and food for those in greater need. We come to love God and love our neighbour. 'Come, all you who are thirsty... You will go out in joy.' Come and go. This is the rhythm of our lives, to the glory of God who richly provides with everything (1 Timothy 6:17).

SONG: ALL WHO ARE THIRSTY

All who are thirsty

All who are weak

Come to the fountain

Dip your heart in the stream of life

Let the pain and the sorrow be washed away

In the waves of his mercy

As deep cries out to deep

(we sing)

Come, Lord Jesus come (x4).

All who are thirsty...

Come, Lord Jesus come (x4).

Holy Spirit, come (x4).

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Lord of the harvest, we thank you for all who have worked on land and sea to provide our daily food. We remember our farmers and fishermen and

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those in other parts of the world who have planted the seed and tended the crops, and the fruit of whose labours we enjoy.

Grant that they may receive justice, a fair return for their labour and hope for the future with a stable climate.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer

We pray too for those who package and deliver our food, for shopkeepers and restaurateurs, for those concerned with the nation's health and for ourselves, that we may shop wisely and with thought for others.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer

Father, we are mindful that whilst we are well fed and nourished there are many who are short of food, whose harvests have failed for lack of rain as climate changes, or whose livelihood has been destroyed by war, inhumanity and exploitation.

Bless the development agencies who are seeking to redress the balance and bring peace and justice where there is want, discord and destruction.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer

Bless those who work for climate justice so that all countries, rich and poor, will have an equal entitlement per person to create greenhouse gas emissions.

Give us generous hearts that from our riches we may increasingly give our support to those working among the poor and under-privileged in the world, and keep us ever mindful of our Lord's command to love our neighbours – whether close at hand or in the wider world – as ourselves.

Lord of the harvest
Hear our prayer

We ask all these things in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are
yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

SONG: YOU SHALL GO OUT WITH JOY

**You shall go out with joy
and be led forth with peace,
And the mountains and the hills
shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy,
and the trees of the field
shall clap, shall clap their hands.
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And you'll go out with joy.**

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Gracious Lord, full of faithfulness, your generous love supplies us with the fruits of the earth in their seasons, and the bread of heaven, even yourself. Give us grace to be thankful for all your gifts, to use them wisely, and to share our plenty with others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with you this harvesttime and for evermore. Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.