

Bible month Series 1 (Prepared by Stephen Appiah)

Isaiah 2:3 *Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths."*

Let us worship our God with the hymn

Stf 471 Lord I come to you ([Lord I come to you the power of your love lyrics video - YouTube](#))

<p>1 Lord, I come to you, let my heart be changed, renewed, flowing from the grace that I found in you. And Lord, I've come to know the weaknesses I see in me will be stripped away by the power of your love.</p> <p><i>Hold me close, let your love surround me ; bring me near, draw me to your side. And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle, and I will soar with you, your Spirit leads me on in the power of your love.</i></p>	<p>2 Lord, unveil my eyes, let me see you face to face, the knowledge of your love as you live in me. Lord, renew my mind, as your will unfolds in my life in living every day by the power of your love.</p> <p>Geoff Bullock (b. 1956)</p>
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Or (stf 470 Lord for the years)

Prayer of adoration and forgiveness

Gracious God, we come to you in adoration and praise for the world so beautiful. You offer us so much in our lives with your constant care and love for humanity. We come with our worship because of who you are. We come to praise you for sending your Son and your Holy Spirit to adopt us into your kingdom. Your unconditional love for us never ends and great is your faithfulness!

Remind us of how much you have forgiven us and we ask that you help us to let go of any burden and hurt that we carry for too long and not willing to let go. Forgive us for any prideful thoughts and help us to forgive others. We pray that you accept our repentance and be present in our worship and bless each one of us. Grant us your Spirit of Wisdom and teach us to be faithful disciples and fill us with Your Spirit now and for ever. This we ask in the sacred name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

All- age: How many wings does an angel have?

We love stories about angels but they are mysterious creatures. Sometimes they are nice, other times they are stern and harsh. We like good angels especially when they come from God with good news, love, blessings and all the good things.

They are often identified as having human form but with wings on their back. There are so many different types of angels. Sometimes they appear without wings and look completely human. That can be confusing because they have to introduce themselves that they are angels and you have to take their word for it. Isaiah tells us of angels he saw in a vision called Seraphim. They had 6 wings but they fly with 2 and use 2 wings to cover their faces and the other 2 wings to cover their legs. Can you use your imagination to do a drawing of this type of angel? Why do they cover their faces? These angels offer worship before God and they serve in the holiest of all places. They spend their day announcing that God is holy. It is the same God we serve and we must know that God is holy. After you have drawn an angel with 6 wings, then write the word “HOLY” at least three times – all over your drawing. It is not the angel who is holy but the God we serve who is HOLY.

Isaiah 5: 1-7

The Song of the Vineyard

I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. 2 He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. 3 “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. 4 What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? 5 Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. 6 I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” 7 The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Isaiah 2: 1-5 (New International Version): The Mountain of the Lord

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. 3 Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. 5 Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Hymn Stf 437 when the music fades ([The Heart of Worship - by Matt Redman - YouTube](#))

<p>1 When the music fades, all is stripped away and I simply come ; longing just to bring something that's of worth, that will bless your heart. I'll bring you more than a song, for a song in itself is not what you have required. You search much deeper within through the way things appear, you're looking into my heart.</p> <p><i>I'm coming back to the heart of worship, and it's all about you, all about you, Jesus. I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it, when it's all about you, all about you, Jesus.</i></p>	<p>2 King of endless worth, no-one could express how much you deserve. Though I'm weak and poor, all I have is yours, every single breath. I'll bring you more than a song, for a song in itself is not what you have required. You search much deeper within through the way things appear, you're looking into my heart.</p> <p>Matt Redman (b. 1974)</p>
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Or stf 495 Dear Lord and father of mankind ([Dear Lord and Father of Mankind - YouTube](#))

Or STF 479 the king of love my shepherd is

[The King of Love My Shepherd Is \(Tune: Dominus Regit Me - 6vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Sermon

The background to the book of Isaiah

Hello friends, this is the first of our Bible Month series focusing on the book of Isaiah which is an important book. I will start with a brief history about the era and the book itself. There are 2 descriptions to explain here – it is a canonical prophetic book and it is a major prophetic book. It is canonical because not all the prophetic books are in the Bible and Isaiah is an appropriate book to include in the Bible. It is a major prophetic book not because it is more important than the other books but because of its sheer volume. The books of Isaiah, Daniel and Jeremiah are by their sheer volume considered major prophetic book compared with Micah, Malachi etc. which wrote minor prophetic books or few chapters.

Political instability

Isaiah was called around 740BC and between 700 and 800BC, God sent far more prophets than any other era before and after this period. This is significant because these prophets were being sent to warn Israel of impending doom. There was an imminent judgement of God on his own people. Nations around Israel were becoming powerful but the spiritual health of Israel could be described as “yo-yo” and was on the decline. King Uzziah reigned for 52 years and Israel became powerful because they served God initially. Towards the end of his reign, their worship declined. After King Uzziah died, the next king Joham failed to rally the people to serve God and after King Joham died then King Ahaz

completely ignored God and the people abandoned the worship of God, then King Hezekiah came and tried to restore the worship of God.

Isaiah himself was a cultured prophet with a career in the Kings court and served as an advisor to Kings Uzziah, Joham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, so his background was different from other prophets called from agricultural background. He understood the spiritual health of the people, the political strength of the nations around and could interpret God's message in the right social and economic perspective.

In the year King Uzziah died, Israel was shaken. A king who had ruled for 52 years and made Israel live in peace had died. When popular presidents and kings die, their nations become shocked and they mourn. It was when Israel was mourning that Isaiah received his call. Incidentally the same year Rome was founded.

The message of God to his people could be described as God "playing a broken record". Prophet after prophet, they repeated the same warning. Amos told a story of a vineyard that failed to bear fruit, Isaiah told the same story of a vineyard not bearing fruit. Every prophet lamented about impending judgement from God because his worship had been abandoned. Isaiah was told, these people have stiffed neck – hearing they will not understand and seeing they will not perceive. God was going to abandon them to their fate and let them face his justice. Babylon had become powerful nation and so was Assyria and without the fortress of God, Israel – both northern Israel and Southern Kingdoms were at risk of being overrun.

God pronounces terrible verdict on his people

Being a prophet was one of the most difficult jobs because you have to say it just as you heard it. Isaiah like his predecessors interceded for the people and asked God "**How long will your anger burn against your people?**" God replied: "**until their cities and towns have been laid waste and the homes left without husbands!**" What a terrible message from a God of love!

Here is a God who could see in a distance the disaster that was coming to his people and wished that they would listen, but the people failed to pay attention to his messages and warning. *Just as a reminder: when Jonah pronounced disaster on Nineveh, they repented and God spared them. But for Jerusalem, our Lord Jesus wept over it, and they will not repent. If we repent God will forgive!*

In the first reading, God explains his charge against Israel

God gave an illustration to explain his charge against Israel. A farmer had 10-acre vineyard which he dug around it, tendered the crop and installed a winepress in it, expecting harvest. When the season came, the crop failed to bear fruits and the few vines that bore fruits, the fruits were small and bitter. The farmer told the vineyard keeper, cut all vines down, why should they waste my soil? The vinedresser pleaded, Lord give it another year for me dig around it and if it fails to bear fruits then cut them down. **And God said, judge between me and my people; what haven't I done?**

"All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations—³ a people who continually provoke me to my very face"

I suppose the question could be asked: Why should God continue to punish and subdue other nations to protect his own people who had become obstinate?

In the second reading, we find hope

You would have thought that God had signalled the end of his relationship with his people, but God had not finished with them. In his justice and mercy He had identified the people who still worship him and he was going to keep them as the remnant to come back and rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem.

God told Isaiah, “Now therefore go and tell King Ahaz to ask for a sign”. But the king refused and would not ask for a sign from God.

Isaiah replied to king: **if you will not ask for a sign, then the Lord God will give you a sign “A virgin shall give birth to a son and shall call his name Emmanuel – God with us.**

Israel was conquered by Assyria, then Babylon, then Persia and later by Rome.

The rest of the book of Isaiah is a message of hope about the coming Messiah, and I suppose if there was no New Testament, the book in the Old Testament we will turn to, in order to learn about Jesus will have to be the book of Isaiah.

Tough Love

The first series of Bible month has been titled “Tough Love” and it is a tension between the love and justice of God. We live in a free society, and we can argue that the Israelites should have been given freedom of worship. The question is “does our freedom of worship compel and oblige God to protect us and show his mercy to everybody?” God has demonstrated his love towards us in that whilst we were yet sinners, God sent his Son to come and die for us. God recognises our sinfulness and yet continues to love us but if we reject his call, then can we ignore his justice. We live in a time of grace but grace should not be taken for granted. Tough love is a dilemma for God. Amen

Stf 503 Love divine ([Love Divine, All Loves Excelling \(Tune: Blaenwern - 3 double vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#))

<p>1 Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down, fix in us thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown. Jesu, thou art all compassion, pure, unbounded love thou art ; visit us with thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.</p> <p>2 Come, almighty to deliver, let us all thy life receive ; suddenly return, and never, never more thy temples leave. Thee we would be always blessing, serve thee as thy hosts above, pray, and praise thee, without ceasing, glory in thy perfect love.</p>	<p>3 Finish then thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be ; let us see thy great salvation, perfectly restored in thee : changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise !</p> <p>Charles Wesley (1707–1788)</p>
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(stf 504 May the mind of Christ my saviour)

[May the Mind of Christ My Saviour \(Tune: St Leonard - 5vv\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

Prayer of intercession: Heavenly Father, we approach the throne of grace to intercede for your people. Our world is ravaged by war, illness, high cost of living, poverty and injustice. We pray that You would look down with pity on the nations of the world and the people whose lives are trapped in the

devastation of war, people whose homes have been destroyed. The children from Ukraine who are scarred by the madness of war.

We share the pain and anguish of those who have had to flee from their homes, countries and livelihoods and the risks they face fleeing from war.

God of life, we ask for your healing power on those who are enduring pain and illness.

We especially think of and all those we name quietly in our hearts.....

We share the grief of people close to us, who've recently lost loved ones.

We especially think of

We know your everlasting light shines within us in moments of great sadness as well as great joy. Within our darkest night, Let your hope and light shine through our darkness.

We pray for our own country and the people who are severely affected by the high cost of living. We pray for areas in the world where the people are trapped in poverty and injustice, that they may find grace and justice. Only the sovereign power of the Holy spirit can bring peace and hope to our world.

We pray for our queen and our nation as well as the Commonwealth that you will sustain her in your grace. God of love and hope, renew in us a deeper sense of who we are in you.

Help us to be aware of your presence every day. Make us instruments of grace and may the power of resurrection bring us hope and new strength through Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Blessing

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord send us out from here in the power of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord equip us to be the source of strength for others. May his peace rest on us for ever. Amen