



## Message | Jesus' invitation to come to the waters

Greetings my brothers and sisters in Christ, what a joy that we can come together to worship, as we journey together on our Lenten journey.

For those watching via live stream, unable to be here today, and we continue to pray that, we will be restored to normal daily lives, that we will be able to once again come together each Sunday for worship and fellowship.

I pray, that today's message for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent, will lift all our spirits, and encourage us, as we live out our lives as Christians, committed to lives of service, in God's Kingdom!

*Let us pray.*

*Heavenly Father, as we gather together as living stones, part of your Church, we ask the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, kindling in them the fire of your love.*

*Almighty God, speak to us through your Holy Spirit, and as we walk in the light of your Spirit may we grow in wisdom, always rejoicing in the comfort He brings, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Well, we have just sung today's message in our Gospel Hymn!

Why am I not surprised, when the message today of about God's life-giving invitation to this world, is summarised in our Gospel hymn today?

*Come to the waters, you who are thirsty.* Margaret chose this hymn, nearly 2 months ago, and as I was preparing the message last week, I looked over the hymns for today, and there it was, today's message in the Gospel Hymn.

Yet another wonderful "God incidence", through the Holy Spirits Guidance.

When we look at our readings for today, do you notice a contrast between Isaiah and 1 Corinthians?

Our passage from Isaiah is musical, joyful, and full of assurance, whilst in Paul's first letter in to the Corinthians in chapter 10, his tone seems to be particularly gloomy and one could say possibly threatening.

In Isaiah, at the heart of chapter 55, is this wonderful picture of God's extravagant invitation to the banquet to all people. We notice the following points about this incredible life changing invitation, that:-

- There is no cost!
- All are welcome.
- The theme of forgiveness.
- However, there are still those trying to *buy* food and wine, although they can see and smell the free riches that are spread out on God's banqueting table.
- It is almost as if they are afraid to believe in the generosity of God.

- Surely there must be some catch, they ask?

Isaiah assures us, that there are no hidden clauses, and that the invitation is for all God's people, and through them, for all the world.

When we consider this wonderful invitation was written nearly 2,700 years, yes to the Hebrew people in Jerusalem, but I think we must all agree it is very applicable to all of us in our so called 'modern society' of today.

That message of truth and hope, and that all who ask for God's mercy will receive it.

The only step that is needed, is to accept God as God is, and trust in His abundant love and mercy!

We then turn from this hymn to the love of God, to what St Paul has to say to the Corinthians.

The central message of this challenging passage is 1 Corinthians 10.12: *"If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall."*

What a wonderful reminder to all of us!

The Corinthian's obviously believe that they are indeed standing, that they know most of the answers, and that they have entered into God's promises. Paul holds up to them the picture of others who believed themselves so secure that they no longer bothered to attend to the character of God.

Perhaps there is not, after all such a great contrast between Isaiah and Paul.

Isaiah reminds us that God's ways are not our ways, and Paul is just putting that reminder in sterner language.

We recognise that it's a lifetime's discipline, turning to God, learning God's nature and His will, *patiently and humbly, over and over again.*

Our great temptation is for short cuts that lead to more immediate gratification. *The modern chant of "when do we want it! Now!* Chanted repeatedly and monotonously, and then reinforced by electronic media advertisements, comes to mind!

But, as Isaiah 55.2 asks, "Why spend your money for what is not bread?" or as our Gospel Hymn says, *"Why spend your money on what cannot fill the emptiness deep in your heart?"*

Today's passages from Luke's Gospel are about both repentance and mercy. Isaiah may seem to stress mercy and Paul repentance, but Isaiah knows that we have to turn back to God, to receive His mercy, and Paul knows that *'God is all ways faithful'* in his desire to hold us in our struggles.

The two passages from Luke's Gospel seem to pull in different directions.

In Luke 13.1-5, has about it, the familiar ring of urgency that is associated with Jesus' ministry.

All who meet Jesus are aware that they have come to a crisis point, a point at which they have to take decisions.

It sounds as though the people who told Jesus about death of the Galileans at the hands of Pilate were hoping to provoke Jesus into some kind of violent reaction. But, if so, they were disappointed.

Instead, Jesus faces them with the knowledge of their own mortality. Don't put off life changing decisions, Jesus urges them, because you may never have the chance again.

But doesn't the story of the fig tree then suggest the opposite?

The fig tree is offered mercy and a second chance to prove itself.

Are we in a great rush, or can we take our time?

What is on offer is the generous mercy of God.

What possible reason can there be to procrastinate about such a blessed offer?

Our mission, my brothers and sisters in Christ, is to be bearers of God's invitation to others, to gently, lovingly invite and encourage all, to 'come to the waters', and be encouraged in our mission, as the Gospel hymn says in the last verse *'My Word upon you can never return, until My longing is filled.'*

Come, Listen and Live! Amen