

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn:

Reading: Isaiah 40.27-31

Prayers: Bunt, Gwen, Gerry, Margaret Tyldesley,

There are times in most of our lives, sometimes short periods, sometimes many years, when we can be inclined to say, with the exiles in Babylon, "My way is hidden from the Lord."

Where is God when we do not feel his presence, when our expectations are shattered and life seems to have lost its joy and become a drudgery?

Second Isaiah speaks to a dispirited people.

- Their ancestors had believed that Jerusalem, the holy city, would never be overthrown. They believe God would protect it, – but the day came when its walls were scaled and the city was taken.
- Many of her most able citizens had been transported to Babylon.
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In the British Museum you can see a remarkable series of carved panels showing the arrival of these prisoners, bowed down, guarded, carrying heavy loads.

For years nearly 40 years they had been in Damascus. A generation had died. They had lost hope that they would ever be free.

- Worship continued for some but it can feel a vain thing. They went through the ritual but they had no sense of God's presence.....
- The death of someone we love,
- a job that does not satisfy,
- the memory of a past injustice which continues to rankle,
- the sense of unfulfilled hopes and dreams,
- depression and feel "low",
- the lack of any personal experience of God, all can lead to that frustrated cry, "Where are you God?" and the fatalistic comment, "My way is hidden from the Lord!"
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God is either absent or has turned his back on us.

How does Isaiah answer this feeling of being abandoned? He begins by reminding them of what they have learnt about God from the time of their youth.

- First, their God is the universal God. He is not a God confined to one place or time. He is the God of "understanding", who knows the whole truth about the universe and who therefore knows us in all our need.
- Secondly, there is a sense in which God shares his energy with those who have grown weak and listless.

As we get older we often look back to a time when it felt as though we had boundless energy when we could play a game of rugby in the afternoon, do some

work in the evening and then spend half the night at a party. Ah, those were the days!

(What I sometimes forget is that I didn't always make it to the lectures the next morning!)

But Isaiah promises that even as we get older we can experience the power which renews us as we journey through life:

***“Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,
They shall soar with wings like eagles,
They shall run and not be weary,
They shall walk and not faint.”*** (40.31)

He says to the captives in Babylon and to us that we shall soar, then run, and finally walk.

It has seemed to many people that this is the wrong way round. We ought to begin by walking, then run and finally soar.....

Yet, maybe this order is true to life.

- When we are young we often soar: we have great flights of joy and delight, faith and love. There seem to be easy answers to the world's problems.
- When we are older we work hard we run after our children and life is often good as we get on with practical work of putting faith into practice.
- But, thanks be to God that in those years when we are older and we do not have the energy we once had, when we've know some of the knocks life brings and it would be easy just to put our feet up, that we are given the grace still to walk with God and to share in his life and work.

Our communion is a time to relax in the presence of the God who knows us through and through and yet who still loves us with a great passion.

We may or may not feel his presence today but our communion declare that the God we meet in Jesus is with us.

So, in faith, may we dare to believe:

- that the holy and eternal God is with us,
- that he has a good purpose for our lives
- and that he invites us to walk with him along new paths in the strength he gives us for this new day.

Amen.