

TUESDAY COMMUNION  
"God, Grace and Future".

Hymn: 215 Amazing grace (For a community and NOT just individuals)

Reading: Isaiah 55.6-3

Prayers:

There is a great difference between believing there is a God and actively seeking to know God and the desire to be caught up in his life and work.

As the moment draws near for their liberation, for the slaves of Babylon to be set free, Isaiah urges that this is the time to "seek the Lord" and to draw near to the God who draws near to them.....

One of the things that always happens when people draw nearer to God who knows them is that they become aware of the truth about themselves. A light is shone on our lives and we see more of the truth about ourselves and the truth about God.

The truth about ourselves is often mixed. Sometimes the truth people need to see about themselves is that they have been caught up in the work of God without ever realising it. The mother realises that by caring for her child she has been sharing in God's work of caring for children. The person spending hours at work realises that their work is a God-given contribution towards the enrichment of society.

On the other hand, when a light is shone of on our lives we are often aware that we are far from being all that God would want us to be.

Yet, Isaiah's final words are about the very nature of God and how his nature transforms our lives.

- He speaks of the God of grace. He tells of how God welcomes those who "return to the Lord" and how he is merciful and will "abundantly pardon". This is a God who doesn't do what we human beings sometimes do, pardon, but then never cease to remind people of their past failings. "Abundant pardon" is wiping the slate clean and encouraging people move on and get on with life, not holding their past failings against them.
- He speaks, too, of the God whose thoughts and ways are different from ours. He is the God who is wholly reliable. His will is like the rains from the sky which falls to the land and produce a harvest.

He desires our good and his good purposes will ultimately succeed.

***"My word.... shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose."***

- He is God who brings about change. At this point we may think Isaiah has lost leave with reality for he speaks of how as the slaves go back through the

desert on their long journey to Jerusalem “Instead of thorns shall come up the  
Cyprus; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle.”

It is as though the curse God had put on his creation in the ancient story of Cain and  
Abel has been reversed.

Of course, in a literal sense the deserts have not been transformed. Nor, looking  
around our world has the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit  
meant that the whole world has become the place where we dwell together in love  
and mercy, peace and justice.....

But for those who draw near to God, who open their own lives to the message of  
Second Isaiah and to the still greater act of God in raising Jesus from the dead life is  
eternally transformed.

We have come to know a God of grace. That knowledge doesn't make life physically  
easier for us.

Indeed, like the Suffering Servant of God, it sometimes means that life becomes far  
more demanding.

What we do know is that the God of grace is leading us and with all his people on a  
journey towards that fullness of life that he wants for his whole creation. We are  
moving towards a fulfilment of all our deepest hopes and the overcoming of all our  
fears.

The best is yet to be.

In faith, we see this through Isaiah and the slaves in Babylon and through the  
resurrection of our Lord and his victory over all that seeks to enslave us and even  
death itself.

We rejoice in our God of grace who is ever seeking to give new life to his world and  
to us.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

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