

Isaiah 55:1-9

Luke 13:1-9

Introduction

Come

I wonder what is the best invitation you have ever received? I was very excited to receive an invitation from the Archbishop of Canterbury to a Garden Party to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women priests. My sister topped that with an invitation to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. It is exciting to be invited to special events but sometimes the best invitations are the simple ones --like the invitation I received from my niece to have lunch with my mother, my sister and my nieces next Sunday. After two years of rarely meeting that is an invitation I am very happy to have received.

Our reading from the prophet Isiah gives us a most generous invitation from a loving God.

“Is anyone thirsty?

Come and drink—

even if you have no money!

Come, take your choice of wine or milk—

it’s all free!

There are times when all of us are thirsty, when we haven’t had enough to drink and our mouth are dry and our lips sore, when a simple glass of cold water tastes like nectar. If we don’t receive enough to drink our bodies waste and die – and that is why there is so much concern about the residents of Mariupol who have been for days without fresh water. The invitation here is not just for our physical thirst but our spiritual and emotional thirst as well.

We may be thirsty for justice, for love and companionship, for power, for wealth. But God’s message rebukes his listeners Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength?

Why pay for food that does you no good?

Listen to me, and you will eat what is good.

You will enjoy the finest food.

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Every mother knows the frustration of having prepared a nutritious tasty meal for their child to find that all they want to eat is chocolate or crisps. Often things that appear attractive do us less good than the less attractive option. God is telling his listeners that they are seeking the wrong things. They are spending their efforts, their money, on things that don't do them good and may actually be harmful

The prophet is writing to the people of Israel, in exile, in Babylon. They are living in a society with values and behaviours that were very much at odds with the calling of the God of Israel and he calls to his people to return to their promised land and to allegiance to him. The life they are living is not good for them they had turned away from worshipping God and had adopted attitudes and beliefs from the Babylonian society.

Having invited them to come he calls on them to

Listen

Come to me with your ears wide open.

Listen, and you will find life.

I will make an everlasting covenant with you.

I love this picture, of ears wide open. So often we listen but don't hear. I think it is very true of all of us and it can happen to us as Christians. We can become so familiar with bible passages, with hymns and prayers that we no longer really hear them or take their meaning into our lives. It is easy to hear and not to respond, to let things wash over us without informing us or transforming us.

God here calls to his people to come prepared to listen, to hear God's words and in the living word of God to find life. Full and fulfilling life in all its fullness; life lived with God and transformed by his power.

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Seek

Seek the LORD while you can find him.

Call on him now while he is near.

⁷ Let the wicked change their ways

and banish the very thought of doing wrong.

Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them.

Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.

God seeks us out, he holds out his arms to us and he beckons us to share a relationship with him but he expects us to respond to turn to him and to look for him. This weekend we are celebrating Daffodil weekend in Thriplow and in the glorious sunshine amidst the beauty of the flowers, the sound of birdsong and the joy and friendliness of the people we met with God. God created us and made us to be in relationship with him we see him around us, in creation, in each other and most of all in Jesus Christ who came to earth to help us meet with God and to rescue us by his death and resurrection.

In the words of the prophet God is saying to his people look around you, look at the society in which you live – is that where I am? No seek me, come to me, turn to me – and turn away from wrongdoing. The values of the people amongst whom they lived were very different from the values God gives to his people and the people of Israel had learned sinful ways that didn't honour God. In some ways this is very similar to the situation we find ourselves in. The world around us has very different values from those of the Holy God who calls us. It can be easy to turn aside and live by the values of a consumer society where wealth and power are held out to us as the things to seek, but God calls us to look to him, to turn away from the things that divert us and distract us and come to him for healing and forgiveness and fullness of life.

The Invitation to 'come' has strong echoes of Jesus' words, "Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest". I think that many of us are desperately weary

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after the stress and strains and sheer hard work of the past two years; we are burdened with anxiety, and loss and pain. And especially at the moment with the uncertainties of the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis we are heavy laden and weary. God gives us a wonderful invitation

“Is anyone thirsty?

Come and drink—

even if you have no money!

Come, take your choice of wine or milk—

it’s all free!

He invites us to come to him, to receive of the best from him freely and lovingly given.