

From Pastor's Desk...

The Mountains and the Hills shall Sing

Isaiah 55:12

The book of Isaiah is one of the most complex literary structures of the entire Old Testament. The British poet and literary critic, Matthew Arnold, loved the book of Isaiah. Although he was a secular reader and writer, he still thought Isaiah was a poetic masterpiece and it was even better than Shakespeare's classics! The major part of this amazing book uses the elevated speech of poetical language.

Isaiah's writings comprehensively reveal the good news of God. Augustine called the book of Isaiah as the 'Fifth Gospel', and many others referred to it as 'The Bible Miniature', because it contains 66 chapters just as the Bible contains 66 books. The generally agreed divisions of the book of Isaiah are as follows:

Chapters 1- 39: Messages on Judgment

Chapters 40 - 55: Addresses the Exilic Israel

Chapters 56 - 66: Post Exilic Messages

Our text for this bulletin taken from Chapter 55 is the message addressed to the Exilic Israel.

"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

Here the prophet has used the poetical language to express the joy, peace, and happiness of the repentant and returning Jewish people from their exile. Such language occurs especially in the poetry of Orientals and in the Bible. Thus, Psalms 98:8 says,

"Let the flood clap their hands; let the hills be joyful together."

The poetical expressions of "hills will burst into song", and "all the trees of the field will clap their hands", in Isaiah 55:12 are explanations of joy and rejoicing of God's creation.

The prophet tells us four things:

1. God does not leave His people in exile forever
2. God restores His people when the period of punishment is over
3. God always gives us enough time to repent
4. God wants His people to be rejoicing because even the inanimate objects like hills, mountains, and trees become animate and rejoice before Him when God visits them

May God give you His grace to rejoice before Him throughout the month of June.

God Bless You

Rev. K. M. Varughese

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The Great Invitation

Denny Varghese, Worship Leader (English)

Isaiah 55 is God's great invitation. The 'you' in vs.12 is all who respond to God's invitation as noted in the different verses of this chapter. Vs.1: One who comes to the water; Vs.6: One who seeks the Lord; and Vs.7: One who returns to the Lord. This 'you' is the person who has a need, then seeks the Lord and trusts in the promises of God. It is clear that God is planning a special kind of future for 'you'. There is so much evil, grief and pain in this age but He offers an assurance that 'you will go out in joy.' It seems to refer to a getting 'out of' something terrible/unpleasant and entering into something new. However, it is not just simply going out, but going out 'in joy'. God is planning an age of perfect happiness where there will no longer be sorrow or the effects of sin. He is promising an eternity of happiness. This hope of joy implies a state of inner repose and tranquility.

Further, you will be 'led forth in peace', which implies a sense of an outer quietness and stillness. Picture an absence of all chaos and the presence of absolute calm. We will be 'led' into this state of peace, which suggests that there is someone, who is victorious, trustworthy, leads and goes ahead of us. This is great news especially given the current and ongoing evil against humanity that we see worldwide.

Last but not least, the beautiful nature will celebrate our welcome into the new world by "bursting into song" and "clapping their hands". Major change will take place and all curses will be lifted (vs.13). This is the ushering in and the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Rest assured in His unchanging promises, and plan for the future!

Break Forth into Song

Jiju John, Worship Leader (Malayalam)

One of the Bible's most prominent themes is that of God as creator. As creator, God possesses the heavens and the earth. God sustains and controls His creation. Every day, these creations must look to Him for His provisions. Creations witness to God's invisible attributes of eternal power and divine glory. It also serves God by giving praise to Him.

Isaiah 55:12 says, "The mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."

Why should all the creations be joyful? Why burst into song?

Long ago when Adam sinned (Genesis 3), a curse came on the entire creation. Part of the curse made man's labor hard and frustrating by thorns and briars.

However, this curse will vanish soon. Thorns and briars will pass away, and things of beauty and strength and usefulness, the cypress and the myrtle will replace their place. This is the very kingdom of God established on the earth. Christ is coming. He is the King and He is bringing and establishing righteousness. Just as we wait for that glorious day, creation begins to praise God that this day is coming.

We are to learn from God's creation. When a Christian's minds turns to the nature, his heart turns to God in worship and praise. So, will you respond to nature's greatest invitation? Come, celebrate God's presence and proclaim the coming of our Lord. Let us break forth into song! Amen.