

From Pastor's Desk...

## A Great Invitation! Break forth in Joyful Song

Isaiah 40-55 surveyed the Babylonian exile, tracing the pattern of redemption largely in terms of the Israelite home coming. They were in alienation from God for several years, not conscious of their calling to be a light to the Gentiles. The fourfold invitation 'to come' (55:1-3) is a pronouncement of the abounding grace of God. As we read Israel's history in the Old Testament, we are faced with a continued record of disobedience, lawlessness, and apostasy. Yet, the prophets who appeared in those generations of despair anticipated the fulfillment of the covenants and called the covenant people to confession and restoration so that the promised blessings could be real in the life.

The blessings that a restored nation, Israel, could anticipate were based on the covenant, God had given to Abraham (51:1-5). The pathway of blessing lies in seeking the Lord and in forsaking sin. Those who return to the Lord will receive mercy and forgiveness freely. It is challenging the mind for repentance and the will for the plans. It is both negative (forsake) and positive (return, or turn), personal (to the Lord), and specific (for mercy) and the abundance of the promise (Vs. 7). The means of God's blessings are well attested by the prophet (8-11).

1. Trust in the wiser thoughts of God. They are farther reaching and more fertile as well as greater than ours.
2. Find the higher ways of the Lord. They truly transcend anything we could imagine in life
3. Believe in the power of God's word that never fails. It is irresistible and effective as the rain and snow. It accomplishes the intended purpose and achieve its aims.

The assurance of liberation will be holistic. You turned my wailing into dancing, you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with great joy, that my hear may sing to you and not be silent (Ps 30:11-12). The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed...the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Rom. 8:19-21). All nature will rejoice in their liberation. Let us acknowledge and accept the gracious invitation of God to participate in the blessings of God.

In His Glorious Ministry,

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## Let us Accept His Invitation

(Br. Lijo Mathew)

The book of Isaiah, one of the most complex in terms of its literary structure, consists of and focuses on the judgement, promises and restoration for Judah, Jerusalem and the Nations. Throughout the Bible, we witness a loving, caring, thoughtful and compassionate God who is eagerly waiting for those who hear His voice and put their trust in Him completely. In the Old Testament, if God spoke to Israel and the nations through His chosen servants, in the New Testament, He sent His own son Jesus for the salvation of the entire humanity. This teaches us how much He loves us.

In Isaiah 55, God is awaiting a response to the great invitation He sent out to His people. He is inviting the thirsty, poor and all who are laboring hard--to come, listen and take delight in His abundance. He is offering a second chance to the wicked and the unrighteous. He is asking them to forsake their ways and thoughts, and to turn to Him so that they will receive mercy. Here is a gracious offer of pardon, peace and happiness.

Prophet is encouraging to seek the Lord and to call on Him while He may be found and He is near. His word will transform all those who return and seek Him earnestly. They will then be filled with joy and receive everlasting peace. At that moment, even the nature will burst into song and clap their hands in praising Him (*Isaiah 55:12*).

Like the time of prophet Isaiah, even today our God is calling all those who are weary and heavily burdened. While we are in a world that is filled with tensions, sickness, worries, pain and grief, we can find refreshment for souls and enjoy peace offered through His son Jesus who died on the cross of Calvary for the sin of mankind.

He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is an unchanging God. Therefore, let us accept His invitation, receive mercy and pardon for all our sins, trust in His triumphant promises, dwell in His house and watch the mountains and hills burst into song and trees of the field clap their hands.