



St Margaret's Church

Together we aim to:
Worship God, Proclaim Jesus,
Grow in the Spirit

In Contact

28th February 2021

Isaiah 43: 1-21

Restoration Promised



In the TV programme 'The Repair Shop', people bring damaged treasures to be restored to their former glory. Not only are the objects themselves restored and made like new, but the items are then restored back to their owners and are given a new lease of life for future generations to enjoy.

Today's Bible passage is all about God's promise of restoration.

The first four verses are *'filled with more profound love and tenderness from God to His people than can be found anywhere else in the Bible'* (Barry Webb). He is the God who created and formed us. He then tells us: *'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name,*

you are mine.' These are promises we can hold on to when times get hard. But God also promises to be with us in flood and fire. We have seen the damage of flooding in our own country and we have watched the devastation of forest fires on the news. Whether we are overwhelmed by flood or fire (or Covid, or other difficulties), God promises to be with us.

Isaiah prophesies that the children of Israel are heading for hard times. Because they have turned their backs on God, they will be taken captive to Babylon leaving behind whole cities, towns and fields devastated. But in verse 5, despite all they have done, God promises to be with them in captivity: *'Do not fear, for I am with you.'*

Their restoration will be realised through their children. It happened several decades later when King Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians and allowed the children of Israel to return to Jerusalem to *'rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel'* (Ezra 1).

In verses 8-13 we look down into a huge courtroom where God is on trial. All the peoples of the world and their idols are gathered to witness against God. God's only defence is from the witness of the blind and deaf (v8) children of Israel. The proof of God's case is shown by His past revelations and guidance to His people and especially to these deaf and blind witnesses. It was because they were blind and deaf to God that he allowed them to be taken captive to wait for God's ordained release and return. The people of Israel by their very presence, freed from captivity, proved God's case. He is God and He is in control.

In verses 18 to 21 they are told to move on from the past because God is going to do a new thing through them. Just as there will be a physical highway through the desert for the captives to return to Jerusalem, so there will be a new relationship with God, to become *'the people I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise'* (21).

In our 'captivity' under lockdown, God has been with us. We can trust Him for the future, not just to return to 'normal', but to experience the new things that He wants to do with and through us as we continue to live in relationship with Him.



Peter Miller

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Bible Verse for 2021:

I am about to do something new; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43: 19



Daily Hope is a free phone line which offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

APCM 2021

This year's APCM is due to be held at 11.30am on Sunday 25th April, after the morning service. (Arrangements for attendance will be confirmed nearer the time.) A presentation of photos about church life in 2020 will be shown at the meeting. If you have any photos of events or memories from 2020 to add to the presentation, please email them to Matt or Susan (susan.whittaker123@btinternet.com) by Sunday 18th April.

Looking Ahead:

Sunday 7th February: Celebration service will be on "Songs of Comfort" using Psalm 23. Matt will be speaking.

During Lent:

TAKE IT UP: Keep on feeding your "mission muscles" daily with "#liveLent" booklets or whatever book you have found.

GIVE IT UP: If you have given up something for Lent, chances are that you will be saving money. It has been suggested that at the end of Lent, we gather these "savings" and split them between St. Ann's Hospice and Francis House both of which have connections with our church members and both of which would have lost some revenue streams during the pandemic.

February 28th to March 6th **Please Pray for:**

- ♦ People living in east side of Kingsway (from Burnham Drive to Barcicroft Road).
- ♦ Team making Sunday's Celebration Service more interactive & all age friendly.
- ♦ Methods to recruit children & young people now & when pandemic is over.
- ♦ Good response from leafleting 'Streets praying for' in previous week.
- ♦ Duke catching up on his work & getting the best out of his placement here.
- ♦ "Live Lent" books to be helpful to those who are offline.
- ♦ IEM missionaries regularly meeting by Zoom to share & encourage each other.

Television & Radio this week:

BBC 1 - 11.15am: Sunday Worship. The Rev Kate Bottley introduces a church service for Lent from St Martin's Church in Maidstone.

BBC Radio 4 - 8.10am: The Archbishop of Wales, the Most Reverend John Davies, marks St David's Day in a service for the second Sunday of Lent, recorded under lockdown conditions at Brecon Cathedral.

BBC Radio Manchester (95.1FM) 8am to 8.30am: Mike Shaft presents religious stories and the day's news on this local radio programme.

Sunday evening at 8 o'clock:

At home pray for our church family and join them in breaking of bread.



Help is available if you need it: **Call 0800 234 6123**

Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm & Saturday: 10am to 2pm