



THIS IS YOUR SPACE TO GROW

BIBLE READING - ISAIAH 61:1-11



The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; ²to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; ³to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.

⁴They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations. ⁵Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines; ⁶but you shall be called priests of the Lord, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory. ⁷Because their shame was double, and dishonour was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs. ⁸For I the Lord love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. ⁹Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.

¹⁰I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. ¹¹For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and

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as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

These are words of faith

Thanks be to God

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There will always be the issue of false and true prophets and how we discern which is the message from God. What discernment tools do we have to help us?

Suffering can bring spiritual growth, it can be formative for a person's faith. But it can also result in scapegoating 'the other'.

A dictionary definition of 'scapegoating' is:
a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others, especially for reasons of expediency.
(in the Bible) a goat sent into the wilderness after the Jewish chief priest had symbolically laid the sins of the people upon it (Lev. 16).

Having read this definition, what examples can you bring?

What is the mortar that binds us together? In Isaiah, it is God's justice and mercy that binds the people. What binds your families? What binds your own different communities? What binds Christians around the world today? We spend a lot of time focusing on differences, but what is our mortar that holds us together?



What are you willing to fight for, advocate for, having learnt the lessons of 2020? What are you willing to breathe life into? What are not willing to give up?

The kin-dom of God is truly inside out and topsy turvy. Where or how does that challenge you?

If we are like the people in Isaiah, on the threshold of a new era, what will help us move into that era?

