

G'day church family

Please have your Bibles opened to Isaiah chapter 52 from verse 7 to 12 - to begin with - then we'll look at the NT passage from John chapter 1

There's a sermon outline in your bulletin - if you wish to take some notes.

Let's pray for God to reveal His message to us. Let's pray...

Intro (Bad News/Good News)

If you flick on the news on the radio or TV or look at the news on the internet - on any given day - you'll be hit with news headlines like this:

[PowerPoint 1 - Good News/Bad News]

- Vladimir Putin issues warning about rising threat of nuclear war
- Weinstein accuser hopes for "justice" as Hollywood mogul ordered to face court ("Me too")
- Donald Trump may claim he's defeated Islamic State (ISIS), but all signs point to the opposite
- Growing calls for a re-vote on Brexit as negotiations stagnate
- Farmers devastated by a fire in Victoria earlier this year - say it could be years before they see any compensation
- More people becoming homeless after being released from psychiatric care
- Australians are said to be some of the richest people in the world but three million of us are surviving on less than \$22,500 per year!

Lots of bad news... and on and on - it goes...

I did find some - Good News though...

- Singing and dancing Barack Obama stands in for Santa at children's hospital
- Australian cricket team wins the right way in Perth! (no sandpaper needed)

Whatever news you might listen to - it does seem like the bad news far outweighs the good news

Israel's Context (Isaiah 52:7-12, Psalm 137)

The context of our Bible passage today from Isaiah 52

Is bad news for the people of Israel

[PowerPoint 2-Context]

The people of Israel are in exile in Babylon (modern day Iraq) - over 2500 years ago

God has allowed them to be exiled in a foreign land because they have been continually disobeying God's commandments and not worshipping Him properly - and in fact worshipping other gods

So, the bad news is:

They are in exile - they have nothing but the clothes they stand in

The temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed

The city is ruins

They can no longer make sacrifices for their sins at the temple - because there is no temple

How do you think they felt?

Well - Psalm 137 tells us exactly how they felt - A Psalm made famous by Boney "M"

[PowerPoint 3-Psalm 137]

Here's the first few verses of Psalm 137

- ¹ By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
when we remembered Zion [that's Jerusalem]
- ² There on the poplars
we hung our harps,
- ³ for there our captors asked us for songs,
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
- ⁴ How can we sing the songs of the LORD
while in a foreign land?

They don't feel like worshipping God - they're too far away from the temple in Jerusalem - and there's not really anything to sing about - being exiled in a foreign land! It's hardly a joyful experience!

But in amongst all this bad news

The prophet Isaiah - says there's some good news coming

[PowerPoint 4-Isaiah 52:7]

See verse 7 of Isaiah chapter 52:

How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,

who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
"Your God reigns!"

There is going to be some good news - beautiful happy feet are going to bring
this Good News!

There's going to be peace!

The people of Israel are going to be saved from this exile situation

And once again on the Mountain of Zion - which is the hill that Jerusalem is
built

Once again - they will be able to worship in Jerusalem

There will be peace with God

And they will be able to declare - "Our God reigns"

God is still on the throne!

He hasn't left them!

He's always been there!

Happy Feet!

Bringing Happy News!

Happy Days!

So how does this Good News pan out for them:

[PowerPoint 5-v8-12]

See V8 - The watchmen - those who have been watching and waiting for what the OT prophets promised would happen - these watchmen have been waiting for this Good News to come

And they are jumping for joy!

Why? Because as v9 says - God has comforted his exiled people!

How does God bring about this rescue mission?

See v10 - He lays bare His Holy arm

This is a Hebrew way of saying - God rolls up his sleeves before starting work - and the idea is God taking the initiative and stepping into history to bring an end to this exile.

God's in control

After 70 years of being in Exile in Babylon

The great Babylonian Empire was now taken over by the Persian Empire - and it is King Cyrus of Persia who gave the nod for the people of Israel to return to their own land [circa 516BC] - because God had arranged it that way!

And God will show His power and strength not just to the people of Israel being rescued - but to all the nations watching - so they can witness how powerful the God of Israel is

So, in v11 - we have this picture - of the priests and the people of Israel - in a great procession - leaving behind unclean Babylon and returning to worship the Lord in Jerusalem (obviously the temple and the city will have to be rebuilt once they get there) - but they are on their way back!

And in v12 - look how they are leaving Babylon - they're not running away in haste - it is controlled and peaceful - God's salvation always brings peace - and God is going before them - every step of the way!

Our Context

Well - that's great for the people of Israel back in 516BC

But what's that got to do with the people of Toukley in 2018AD

[PowerPoint 6-Context]

Well - our Context is - that whether we realize it or not

We are in exile in our own Babylon

We are in exile because of our sin and rebellion against God

Sin and rebellion that leads to a broken relationship with God and ultimately death (physical death and spiritual death=spiritual exile from God)

We're living in an unclean Babylon - that mostly doesn't worship the One True God - just like the people of Babylon didn't worship the God of Israel.

Our context is crying out for someone to come and rescue us too

We might think our world and our context is not too bad

Oh! We may have tinsel and toys, Christmas lights and presents. We might have the things that provide us with temporary pleasure, and we might think that's enough. Our sinful hearts might think it's enough to hear Christmas carols on the radio or TV - and to see the Christmas lights in the trees and the houses -

and to feast on Christmas roast dinners, cookies and cakes - and to receive a peck on the cheek from underneath the mistletoe.

But that's not enough!

Such things cannot fill our hearts with peace.

It's at Christmas that some people feel depressed and lonely.

It's at Christmas that we miss loved ones who have passed away.

It's at Christmas when many are stressed out of their brains!

The glitter of the holidays just isn't enough to keep peace in our hearts.

That is not what Christmas is.

Christmas is nothing, and we have nothing, if we don't have God's greeting of "Good tidings" - if we don't have God's Good News in our hearts.

The bad news is that many in our context - don't have God's Good News in their hearts.

This bad news of "sin and rebellion against God" - is crying out for God's Good News!

{Illustration of farmer}

The Good News (John 1:1-14)

Praise God - in His wonderful grace and mercy

[PowerPoint 7-Good News]

He's already provided the Good News

He's provided a way out of our Spiritual exile

And He's provided a way we can have peace with Him right now

This is really good news

We use the word GOSPEL to describe this Good News - the Word *Gospel* literally means Good News or Good Message!

From our NT passage from John 1:1-14 [Please turn there now] - we learn how this Good News takes place

This passage speaks about someone called The Word

This someone called the Word - is actually Jesus - God's Son

And this passage makes some stunning claims about Jesus - the Word

a. First, the *Word is a Creational God*

This passage is saying that the Word - Jesus was with God from the beginning of time - before creation - and it was this Word - Jesus - that created everything - just by speaking

b. Not only did the Word create everything - but second - The *Word gives life*. The Words of Jesus show us how to live a life that pleases God - and the Words of Jesus show us how to obtain eternal life - by believing in this Word of Jesus - which is the Word of God

c. Third the Good News is - that The *Word brings people out of darkness of sin* - because the words of Jesus - are so powerful - they are like a

torch shining the light on this dark world of sin and exposes what is against God. Jesus is the light (the torch of the World) guiding us back into a loving and obedient relationship with God

- d. Fourth - The ***Word brings peace with God*** - it allows people - who believe that Jesus died on a cruel cross for their sins to be forgiven - and who believe Jesus rose from the dead - it allows people who believe in Jesus - to become God's children - and to be born of God - born from above - and receive God's Holy Spirit - living inside them - and to bring peace in their hearts!

[PowerPoint 8-Good News contd]

- e. The really good news is that just over 2000 years ago - This WORD of God - became a human being - became human flesh in the form of baby Jesus - see v14 - and stepped into human history - so everyone could see God's glory. Jesus brought two things with Him - GRACE [God's undeserved favour and mercy] and TRUTH [Jesus defined truth as believing in what He says - John 18:37] - so when Jesus says things like "whoever lives by believing in me will never die" and things like "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father [in Heaven] except through me" - we need to take notice of these truths - and believe them!

Our passage today - says that the response to the WORD coming into the world (in verses 9 to 12) was two-fold - just like the response we see to Jesus - today. The 2 responses are:

- a. To either - **receive** the WORD and be rescued and taken out of spiritual exile because of sin - brought into God's family - and brought into the paradise of Heaven
- b. Or to **reject** the WORD - and remain in exile - and remain in sin and rebellion against God

For anyone who hasn't received Jesus as the Son of God - as the one who can bring us out of the darkness - of our sin and rebellion against God - into the light - believing Jesus has the keys to forgiveness and life forever with God - anyone here today who hasn't received Jesus - today would be a great day to receive Jesus into your life [you can come and talk to me afterwards]

(pause)

Now - there are many even in our local community - who don't even know about the WORD - they don't know Jesus -and they've never heard of the 2 choices available to them - to receive the Word - or reject the Word

Challenge (Romans 10:13-15)

So, I'd like to give us a challenge

I'd like us to be - the beautiful happy feet on the mountains - bringing the Good News

When we think of **feet** - we should think of **activity, motion and progress**

Those who are active and moving and preaching/telling the Good News of Jesus - have beautiful happy feet [like John and Jenna]

[PowerPoint 9-Challenge]

The Apostle Paul picks up on this idea of being the feet bringing the Good News of Jesus - in Romans 10:13-15 - which we'll finish with:

¹³ for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

The Apostle Paul's point is - how can people believe in Jesus - if no-one tells them about Jesus? And how can someone tell them about Jesus - if no-one actually puts one foot in front of the other - and goes and tells them?

God is calling EACH ONE OF US - to be those beautiful happy feet bringing the Good News - in our own context - whatever form that takes

Christmas is a great time to do this...

Let's pray...