

+WEEKLY SERMON

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Sing and grow

Isaiah 54:1-3

Whether it's at a football match, a wedding reception or even a church, bring people together, and they will often want to sing.

Research suggest that singing brings significant benefit to our health and wellbeing. Singing elevates your mood, decreases stress levels, and even helps to tone stomach and facial muscles. Who knew?!

The book of Isaiah starts in a minor key. The first 39 chapters speak of the judgement of God against his rebellious people. From chapter 40 onwards, the mood changes as Isaiah speaks of hope beyond judgment. In particular, he focuses our attention on the work of the servant who will bring rescue and forgiveness.

It's in the light of this good news that the LORD urges his people to sing (Isaiah 54:1). Sing, says the LORD, because you are about to enter into the blessing of the servant's work.

"Burst into song, shout for joy... because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband' v1

This family is naturally impossible: the woman is barren, she never bore a child, she never went into labour, she is desolate. And the family she gives birth to is bigger than anything that can be explained naturally. However much Israel may have failed to be the people that God wanted them to be, the Servant of the LORD will bring to pass the promises of God for the world in an astonishing way.

And so, as well as singing, she is to prepare for a great expansion. 'Enlarge the place of your tent' (v2) because you're going to need a bigger pitch – and you need to throw back the tent flaps if you're going to accommodate all the people who are going to come in.

The prophet Isaiah gives us wonderful preview of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, the servant par excellence, producing a worldwide family that will only increase in size. As Paul says in Colossians 1:6, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing all over the world'.

In our churches, it's right to sing with joy because of all that Jesus has done for us. And it's right to pray to him with confidence to continue to grow his miraculous family.

Rev Canon Andrew Raynes, Vicar of Blackburn Christ Church

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES