Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is every chance that there are some children here today who have been promised a certain Christmas present. And the promise has actually been mentioned several times. And they can actually see a wrapped present that is in the shape of whatever it is they have been promised under the Christmas tree. So they know for sure that Christmas Day is going to be fantastic!

But we don’t always keep our promises, do we. Sometimes parents can forget what they promised. And as each day goes by, and the child doesn’t see anything like what they asked for under the tree, they begin to wonder if the promise has been forgotten. And they wonder if Christmas Day will turn out to be a big disappointment?

Well, that is the kind of situation we come to in the opening chapters of Isaiah. In Isaiah’s day, there were many people in Israel who thought that God had forgotten His promise. And to understand how this came about and because we will work our way through several prophecies in Isaiah until Christmas Day, I need to take a bit of time to explain the background of the book.

* Earlier we read from **2 Samuel 23**. And I told you then that God had promised David a kingdom of peace and prosperity. And God told David that when he died a son of his would rule over an eternal kingdom.
* Well, God granted David a kingdom of incredible peace and righteousness. David defeated his enemies, he had seen to it that the priests taught the people the law of God, and Jerusalem was now the home of the Tabernacle and worship. He had been keen to build a magnificent temple for the Lord but the Lord told him that his son would do this so David drew up plans and gathered materials for the building of this Temple.
* And then David died and his son **Solomon** became king. And with God’s promise to David in view, you can imagine the excitement of the people of Israel! Solomon began and completed the building of the massive, golden temple. Solomon was incredibly wise. Life was really good in Israel. It seemed then that Solomon had to be the promised Son of David and this had to be the beginning of the eternal and glorious kingdom of God?
* But if you know your **Bible history**, you will know that Solomon had many wives, including some from pagan nations. And Solomon began worshipping idols and building altars for the idols. And factions arose in Solomon’s court, such that after he died the rebellion of Jeroboam led to the 10 Northern tribes separating from the 2 southern tribes. So now there was Israel ruled by Jeroboam in Samaria and Judah ruled by Rehoboam in Jerusalem. And this sure didn’t look like what God had promised!
* Well, maybe Rehoboam was a temporary blip? Maybe His Son, **Abijam**, would reunite the 12 tribes and be the promised eternal king? uh-uh. He only reigned for three years and he was a complete disaster! But then came **Asa**. And we are told that Asa “*did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as his father David had done*.” Ah! That sounds promising! Asa gets rid of the male cult prostitutes and all the idols. Maybe Asa is the one? But no. For we read, “*The high places were not taken away*.” And eventually, Asa also died. So he was not the Son of David who would rule over an eternal kingdom.
* Well, when Isaiah came along, it was **200 years since David and God’s promise to David**! And during the time that Isaiah prophesied, the 14th son of David who ruled as King in Judah – Hezekiah – came along. And Judah was a very wicked nation. The leaders were corrupt, there was all kinds of sexual immorality going on, the law courts were places of bribery and injustice, and the true worship of God was either non-existent or mixed with idolatry.
* So **Isaiah’s task** was to call the people to repent and to warn them that if they did not, judgment and disaster were sure to come. And Isaiah got very specific in his prophecies and he told them that exile was coming. But Isaiah also had a message of hope; he told them that after the exile there would be deliverance and restoration and renewal!
* So look back now at **chapter 1**.
  + Verse 1 explains *when* Isaiah prophesied. And as I said, Hezekiah was the 14th son of David king who ruled in Judah.
  + And you probably have a title above verse 2 that’s says ‘**The wickedness of Judah**.’ From v2ff, we are given a description of the wickedness of Judah.
  + But then we come to **verse 18**. Look what it says there, “*Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool*.” And basically what the Lord is saying there is that He will deal with the wickedness of His people; He is going to wash them and make them pure.
  + And the rest of the Book of Isaiah will **explore those two things** – the wickedness of the people and how God will wash them and make them pure. And what we learn is that how God will wash away the wickedness of His people has to do with the Son of David King that He has promised. God has not forgotten His promise to David. He is going to raise up a Son of David who will rule as His king and establish a kingdom of eternal peace and righteousness.
* So now turn over to **chapter 2**.
  + Chapter 2 begins Isaiah’s prophecy about what is to happen in Judah and Jerusalem.
  + And Isaiah starts with **good news**! If you quickly scan your eyes over vv1-4, you will see that Isaiah is talking about a time to come when the mountain of the house of the Lord is established as the highest of mountains, and all the nations come to that mountain to worship the Lord and there is peace.
  + But while that sounds like what God had promised, from v5 onwards Isaiah delivers a lot of **bad news**. All the way through to ch. 4:1 he list the wickedness that has gone on and is going on in Judah – corrupt and greedy leaders, immorality, injustice, and idolatry. It becomes plain that the whole of Judean society is utterly dysfunctional. And as God lays out all of the ways that His people have rejected Him and embraced wickedness, their guilt and their being undeserving of such a kingdom is made as plain as the nose on your face. In fact, what they deserve is exile because God said to His people, way back in Deuteronomy, if you embrace idolatry and injustice and immorality, I will exile you to a foreign land. And now, through the prophet, God declares that this is exactly what is going to happen – as you read on in Isaiah, the people are told that they will be oppressed by Syria and Babylon and others and that Jerusalem and the temple will be destroyed and they will be sent into exile.
  + So, try and put yourself in the sandals of a God fearing Jew of that day. Hearing all this, you would be wondering, How can this be? **Has God forgotten His promise to David**? And we know that this is what the Jews wondered. This is exactly the question they asked as each successive son of David king turned out to be a disappointment and then died. And they asked it when they were in Babylon in exile. And even after they returned from exile, they asked it as they were first ruled by the Greeks and then the Romans. **Lord God, have you forgotten your promise to David**? Where will this king come? Where is the promised kingdom?
  + And congregation, to demonstrate that this was the question of the God-fearing Jews of this time, we are going to pause here and **sing. 132 –Lord our God, Remember David**. Use hymnbooks. Pay attention to the words. St 3- your oath. St 5 – kingdom.

Well, God’s answer to the question of His people has so far been that a time of punishment and exile is to come upon Judah. But then comes our text, **Isaiah 4:2-6** and more **good news**! Now we come to the explanation of how God will rescue and deliver and restore and wash and establish His people under the rule of His Son of David King! Now we come to the first of our Isaiah Christmas prophecies!

And it begins, in v2, with the words, “**In that day**…”

* And these words are very important in the Bible. Pretty much whenever you read words like ‘in that day’ or ‘the day of the Lord’ or ‘the last days,’ you are reading about important moments in the unfolding of God’s plan of salvation.
* So turn back now to 2:2 (Good news – future restoration) “in the latter days…”
* 2:11 – the time of judgment – “in that day...”/ v12 – “a day…” / v17 – “in that day…” / v20 – “in that day…” / 3:7 – “in that day…”/ v18 – “in that day…” / 4:1 – “in that day…” The days in that section are the dark days of Judah’s Judgment.
* But as we come to 4:2 – Good news again! – After the time of judgment and exile – “In that day…” A day is coming when… A day to look forward to!
* And at face value it sounds like after the exile A DAY would come when everything described in vv2-6 would happen. And that is exactly what the Jews thought. They thought they would go home after the exile and this king would appear and set up His kingdom. They still thought this when Jesus came 400 years later. It was why they found it so hard to accept Him because He was born in a lowly stable and He just preached and healed people, when they expected a king who would gloriously appear and smash the Romans! But what we have in these verses is what is called a prophecy of **multiple fulfillments**. And you find them throughout the prophets. And it becomes plain that they are prophecies of multiple fulfillments when you put them together with other prophecies and the rest of the Bible. So the first fulfillment was when they returned from exile. The next fulfillment was when the temple was rebuilt. The next fulfillment was the first coming of Jesus. But the last and fullest fulfillment will be the Day when Jesus returns and

brings in the new heavens and the new earth. But all of these are a part of THE DAY spoken about here in Isaiah’s first Christmas prophecy.

And what is significant about “that day” is that “*the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious…*” So what is meant by “**the branch of the Lord**”?

* Well, this takes us back again to our earlier reading in **2 Sam 23:5**. The Hebrew word at the end of that verse literally says that God will cause David’s house and salvation to grow or sprout like a bud on a branch. That’s what the Hebrew word means. Boys and girls, if you have trees at home, this is the season when you see buds on branches – new life from the old. So a descendant of David, a sprout or a bud on the branch of David’s line, would one day come to be the promised King.
* **Isaiah 11:1** uses this same language: “*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit*.” **Jeremiah 23:5** uses this language also: “*Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land*.”
* And in the NT, we see that **the branch is the Lord Jesus**. The very first words of the NT in the Gospel of Matthew are, “*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David*.” Luke gives us the genealogy of Mary, Jesus’ mother, to show that she was a descendant of David. And a regular feature of the sermons in Acts that the Apostles preached to the Jews was showing them that Jesus is the promised Son of David King; He is the beautiful and glorious Branch of the Lord.

Now congregation, we could spend hours picking through the phrases and descriptions of the rest of vv2-6. But today we are going to take them as a whole and consider them by way of a summary.

* They speak about survivors and those who remain in Jerusalem being called holy. And we learn in v4 that they are holy because the Lord has washed away their filth and their bloodstains. And then the Lord creates this magnificent city where there is bright light and a canopy over all the glory, and a booth that provides shelter and refuge.
* Now, I am sure you can see why these words were a great encouragement to the Jews Isaiah spoke to. They thought that these words were about life being just like it was before the exile, with the temple and sacrifices and feasts, and with more of God’s great wonders, like the pillar of fire, accompanying the promised King.
* But as you read through these verses, although they sound like many things we read about in the OT, they suggest more and greater and better! And that is because all of those OT signs and sacrifices and feasts, and even the Promised Land and Jerusalem and the Temple, as wonderful as they were, were always signs pointing to a greater reality. And Israel had demonstrated for centuries now just how unable these earthly versions were to make them the holy people of God.
* So while God is saying that He will bring His people back from exile, ultimately He is talking here about the coming of a **heavenly kingdom**; a city where God will be with His people and they will delight in Him and be free of all that is evil.
* And we know from the rest of the Bible that this began with the **first coming of Jesus**. He came to be and to do what all the sacrifices pointed forward to; He came to die on the cross, so that by His blood our sin and guilt could be washed away. He came so that when a person believes in Him, God “*delivers [Him] from the domain of darkness and transfers [Him] to the kingdom of his beloved Son*.”
* And He came to save us into His **church** – God’s kingdom on earth. For it is in the church that we first experience the presence of God and precious fellowship and the restoration of broken lives, and it is through the church that God extends His kingdom.
* But ultimately this prophecy is pointing us to **heaven**. It is telling us that a Day is coming when we will be with the branch of the Lord in the glory and safety and splendour of heaven. And I shall say more about this in a moment.

But brothers and sisters, young people, and boys and girls, think for a moment about **what this prophecy would have meant for those who first heard it and read it**. Isaiah said that Syria was going to oppress Judah. Isaiah said after that Babylon will invade Judah and take the people into exile. But Isaiah also said that there would be a return from exile and then coming of the Promised Son of David king. So as the people of Judah saw the Syrians rise up against them, they would have thought, Isaiah was right! And as they saw Babylon invade and then take them into exile, they would have thought, Isaiah was right! So if Isaiah was right about our judgment, then we will return from exile. God will send the Son of David king! God has not forgotten His promises!

And that, brothers and sisters, is the chief benefit of this prophecy for us today. Jesus said in **Revelation 22:20**, "Surely I am coming soon." Well, that was 2000 years ago! The church is persecuted. There is war and disease and poverty. There is the toil of your daily work. Strife of relationships.

And we also might wonder if the Lord Jesus has forgotten His promise? But the message of this, the first of our Isaiah Christmas prophecies, is that God does not forget His promise. Just as He brought back His people from exile 2600 years ago, and just as He sent His Son, Jesus, to be the Saviour of the world 2000 years ago, so He will reveal Him at the end of time as the King of all glory who brings with Him the eternal kingdom of peace and righteousness.

And we read about this kingdom in **Revelation 21**. Heaven is described as the holy city, new Jerusalem. It tells us that there God will dwell with man, and that He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. We read, “*The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day- and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations.*

So we too can pray and sing, as we did a few moment ago, Lord Our God remember David. We too can remind God of His promise to David. But we can also pray and sing, as we shall do in a few moments, **Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus** … born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring. B&S, young people and boys and girls, the day is coming when the Branch of the Lord will come again. May it be soon! Amen.