



**Hymn: StF 331 King of Kings, Majesty**

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King of kings, Majesty  
God of Heaven living in me  
Gentle Saviour, closest friend  
Strong Deliverer, beginning and  
end  
All within me falls at Your throne  
  
Your Majesty, I can but bow

I lay my all before You now  
In royal robes I don't deserve  
I live to serve Your Majesty  
  
Earth and Heaven worship You  
Love eternal, Faithful and True  
Who bought the nations, ransomed  
souls

Brought this sinner near to Your  
throne  
  
All within me cries out in praise.  
Your majesty, I can but bow  
I lay my all before You now  
In royal robes I don't deserve  
I live to serve Your Majesty

**Reading: Isaiah 1 v. 11-20**

"The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me?" says the Lord. "I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats. When you come to appear before me, who has asked this of you, this trampling of my courts? Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Your New Moon feasts and your appointed festivals I hate with all my being. They have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood! Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. "Come now, let us settle the matter," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

**Prayer :** King of kings, majestic Lord, we come before you in awe and wonder.

You are holy beyond our imagining, yet you invite us to draw near. You are the sovereign Lord of all creation, yet you stoop to hear the cry of those who are hurting. We praise you because you are not an apathetic God. You see the suffering of your world. You hear the cries of the oppressed. You know the injustice that is done in secret and the pain that is carried silently.

Lord, you desire more than our songs, more than our offerings, more than the outward appearance of worship. You desire hearts that belong to you and lives that reflect your character. Forgive us when our worship has been easier than our obedience. There have been times when we have sung of your majesty but failed to recognise your image in another person. There have been times when we have lifted our hands in praise but kept our hands closed to those in need. Forgive us when we have become accustomed to suffering, and undisturbed by injustice. Forgive us when other people's pain has remained safely outside our concern.

King of kings, have mercy upon us.

Wash us and make us clean. Take what is stained within us and make it new. Where there is selfishness, give us generosity. Where there is indifference, give us compassion. Where there is prejudice, give us love. Where there is injustice, make us people who seek justice. And so we praise you, majestic Lord, because you do not simply expose our sin —you offer us forgiveness. You do not simply show us what is wrong — you call us to walk in a new way. Though our sin may seem deeply stained, you can make it clean. Though we have wandered far, you call us home.

King of kings, majesty, receive our praise, receive our lives, and make us worthy vessels of your love.

Amen.

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| When the music fades<br>All is stripped away<br>And I simply come<br>Longing just to bring<br>Something that's of worth<br>That will bless Your heart<br>I'll bring You more than a song<br>For a song in itself<br>Is not what You have required<br>You search much deeper within<br>Through the way things appear<br>You're looking into my heart | <i>I'm coming back to the heart of<br/>worship<br/>And it's all about You,<br/>It's all about You, Jesus<br/>I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've<br/>made it<br/>When it's all about You,<br/>It's all about You, Jesus</i> | All I have is Yours<br>Every single breath<br>I'll bring You more than a song<br>For a song in itself<br>Is not what You have required<br>You search much deeper within<br>Through the way things appear<br>You're looking into my heart<br><br><i>I'm coming back to the heart of<br/>worship .....</i> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | King of endless worth<br>No one could express<br>How much You deserve<br>Though I'm weak and poor                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

### Message : 'A God who cares'

As we consider these few verses from the beginning of the book of Isaiah, I want to draw out three things they say to us about God and God's relationship with our world.

Firstly, let's start with verses 16 and 17. *Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight; stop doing wrong. Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.*

Our God is a God of compassion. Our God is a God who cares about what happens in this world and loves the people in it. In that respect he is very different to the Greek and Roman gods who are portrayed as being unconcerned and unmoved by the presence of injustice and suffering in the world.

Instead, our God is a God who is portrayed as burning with righteous anger wherever there is suffering that arises from injustice and exploitation of the poor and the vulnerable. Both Jesus and Paul teach us that the entirety of God's guidelines for us can be summed up in a few simple words – Love God and love your neighbour as yourself.

The Greek Stoics used a word to describe the emotional detachment of their gods and that word is apathetic. It comes from two Greek words run together that mean 'without suffering'. To the Stoic philosophers apathy was something positive, a comfortable state to be admired but since then as you know, the word has taken on a much more negative sense of being uncaring and disinterested. That's exactly the criticism being levelled at the people of Judah by Isaiah. They are comfortable, yes, but only because they have let their nation develop an apathetic attitude towards the oppressed and the vulnerable. They may have become disinterested in other people's plight but God wants them to know that he hasn't.

We have already referred to Jesus saying that the two greatest commandments are to completely love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. What God also questions here is whether you can truly be loving God if you're not loving your neighbour. I'm fed up, he says, with your sacrifices and your incense and your prayers and your special days and festival. They are all meaningless to me, he says, if they're not backed up by your treatment of the poor. If you're not loving your neighbour how can you possibly think that you're pleasing God?

And to fast forward to our day and age, no amount of church attendance, prayer, tithing or bible study is going to be pleasing to God if it isn't backed up by how we live the rest of our lives.

So, if our first point is that we have a God who cares, the second is that we have a God who speaks. That's what prophets are. They are people used by God as a mouthpiece which is why their utterances are often preceded by the words 'Thus saith the Lord'.

A phrase once used sarcastically to describe the press could well be used to also describe God's use of prophets. They are there to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable. The latter is mostly what we see in this passage and the rest of the chapter in which it sits. The warning God is giving could not be clearer. *'If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good things of the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.'*

Let me share with you two young children I've seen this week. One was having a great time splashing around in the puddles created by a sprinkler system until, that is, the voice of Dad came booming across to him, 'Albie! You're on a final

warning'. Then moments later I saw a second child strapped into a pushchair and bawling his eyes out. That little boy's final warning had come and not been heeded.

God does not leave us without warnings. Our God does not leave us ignorant of the consequences that are likely to come if we continue with a particular course of action. The difference, though, between us and those two toddlers is that we are fully grown adult human beings and God will not step in to strap us into a pushchair. God has given us freewill and, if we wilfully go on ignoring the warnings of his prophets, he will ultimately allow us to bring disaster upon ourselves.

Sadly, that is exactly what happened to the audience Isaiah was addressing. The warnings weren't heeded. The people did not change their ways. They continued to resist and rebel until, in the end, they were devoured by the sword; overrun by the Babylonian empire.

I started by saying that the passage teaches us three things about God. The first is that our God is a God of compassion who cares so deeply about the world as to get angry when people rebel against the command to love their neighbour as themselves. Secondly, God cares so deeply about these things that when individuals or nations insist upon walking away from his ways, he sends prophets and goes on sending prophets to warn them of the consequences. And thirdly, however far we may have walked down that road of rebellion, God always offers us the hope of forgiveness.

*'Come now, let us settle the matter,' says the Lord. 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.'*

The picture here is of a law court. God has set out his case against Judah. The charges have been laid down. It's an open and shut case with no hope of Judah being anything other than guilty. Yet God says, even now we can settle out of court. If Judah will return to obedience; if Judah will restore justice and defend the cause of the vulnerable then, what does God, say? 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.'

There's something quite remarkable in these words. Red set dyes like scarlet and crimson were deeply set into the dyed material. Humanly speaking it would have been impossible to wash them out to the extent of being able to return to a pure white like snow or wool. Yet that is exactly what God is promising. It's never too late to return to God. We're never too far gone in the things we've done. We might think, humanly speaking, that the stain upon us is unremovable but God promises something different. God promises that we shall indeed be white as snow. Not by any efforts of our own. Not by the mere words of God. But by the actions of Jesus on the cross.

I want us to finish by reflecting upon these words written by Graham Kendrick.

#### **Hymn: StF 270 Come and see**

Watch on YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVy3V5\\_tpkA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVy3V5_tpkA)

Come and see, come and see  
Come and see the King of love  
See the purple robe and crown of thorns he wears  
Soldiers mock, rulers sneer  
As he lifts the cruel cross  
Lone and friendless now he climbs towards the hill

We worship at your feet  
Where wrath and mercy meet  
And a guilty world is washed  
By love's pure stream  
For us he was made sin  
Oh, help me take it in  
Deep wounds of love cry out 'Father, forgive'  
I worship, I worship  
The Lamb who was slain.

Come and weep, come and mourn  
For your sin that pierced him there  
So much deeper than the wounds of thorn and nail  
All our pride, all our greed

All our fallenness and shame  
And the Lord has laid the punishment on him

We worship at your feet  
Where wrath and mercy meet  
And a guilty world is washed  
By love's pure stream  
For us he was made sin  
Oh, help me take it in  
Deep wounds of love cry out 'Father, forgive'  
I worship, I worship  
The Lamb who was slain.

Man of heaven, born to earth  
To restore us to your heaven  
Here we bow in awe beneath  
Your searching eyes  
From your tears comes our joy  
From your death our life shall spring  
By your resurrection power we shall rise

## Prayer

Holy and Righteous God, You have told us that You take no pleasure in empty rituals or lip service when our hearts are far from You. As we gather in Your presence today, we hear Your call to stop doing wrong and to learn to do good. Search our hearts, look past our outward traditions, and hear our prayers for a hurting world.

**Lord, hear our prayer, and wash us clean.**

We intercede today for Your global Church. Forgive us when our worship becomes routine, and when we grow indifferent to the pain outside our doors. We pray for communities of faith across the world—especially those facing persecution or hardship. Grant us the courage to be Your hands and feet. Teach us to actively seek justice, to defend the oppressed, to take up the cause of the fatherless, and to plead the case of the widow.

**Lord, hear our prayer, and teach us to do good.**

We lift up our deeply fractured world. Father, our hands are stained with the blood of conflict and the grime of neglect. We pray for nations torn apart by war, violence, and political unrest. We pray for millions facing severe economic hardship, food insecurity, and displacement. Convict the hearts of world leaders, rulers, and authorities. Turn their minds away from greed and power, and guide them to govern with equity, humility, and a genuine desire for peace.

**Lord, hear our prayer, and bring Your peace.**

We praise You, O God, that the cleansing You demanded in Isaiah is perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Where our own efforts fail to wash away the scarlet stain of sin, the cross of Christ has made us white as snow. By His wounds, we are healed. We lift up all those in our community and around the world who stand in desperate need of that healing today. Touch those suffering from illness, chronic pain, mental anguish, or broken spirits. Pour out Your comforting Spirit upon them, and let the power of the cross bring wholeness to their bodies, minds, and souls.

**Lord, hear our prayer, and bring Your healing.**

Finally, we pray for the weary, the hopeless, and the broken-hearted. You have given us a beautiful promise: “Come now, let us settle the matter. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.” We pray for those carrying the heavy burdens of guilt, despair, or grief today. Open their hearts to Your invitation of grace. Grant us all the willingness to be obedient to Your word, so that we may taste the goodness of Your restoration.

In the holy and redeeming name of Your Son, we pray.

**Amen.**

**The Lord’s Prayer :** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn: StF 495 Dear Lord and Father of mankind** Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsCLNuU6Td0>

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,  
Forgive our foolish ways;  
Re-clothe us in our rightful mind,  
In purer lives Thy service find,  
In deeper reverence praise.  
In deeper reverence praise.

Drop thy still dews of quietness,  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of thy peace.  
The beauty of thy peace.

In simple trust like theirs who heard,  
Beside the Syrian sea,  
The gracious calling of the Lord,  
let us, like them, without a word,  
Rise up and follow thee.  
Rise up and follow thee.

Breathe through the heats of our desire  
Thy coolness and thy balm;  
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;  
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,  
O still, small voice of calm.  
O still, small voice of calm.

O sabbath rest by Galilee,  
O calm of hills above,  
where Jesus knelt to share with thee  
the silence of eternity,  
interpreted by love!  
Interpreted by love!