**Thursday 16th July -** Mike Orman, Worship Pastor

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
    because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives
    and release from darkness for the prisoners,to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of joy instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
    a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour.

There's so much we could unpack in these famous words from the prophet Isaiah, which Jesus proclaimed at the start of his ministry (Luke 4). But I would like to focus today on part of verse 3. I love that the opposing force to a spirit of despair is a garment of praise! How easy is it for us to slip into a mentality of fear and despair when we don't feel in control, when bad news comes our way or when life takes an unexpected twist. We saw it at the start of the pandemic with all the panic buying and we can easily let things overwhelm us when we face uncertainty over things like jobs, exam results and what the future will look like.

Sometimes we have to make a conscious choice to worship. Sometimes it really is a sacrifice of praise. But how well received that must be by the Lord! We have talked before at St Mary's about how we have a unique opportunity this side of heaven to offer worship that costs us something. When we get to heaven there will be no more pain, tears, worry, uncertainty, fear or death. We will be joining in with the thunderous song of heaven, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!'. It will be easy to worship! There will be no distractions, no hinderances, no inhibitions. It will be amazing and pure joy but our worship won't really cost us anything.

So this side of heaven, today, if we are tempted to give in to that spirit of despair, let's instead choose to  take on that garment of praise. Let's 'turn our eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of his glory and grace.'

*Jesus, I will praise You through the fire, through the storm and through the flood. There is nothing that could ever steal my song. In the valley You are worthy,*

*You are good when life is not. You will always and forever be my song.*

*When the enemy says I'm done I lift my praises. When my world comes crashing down I lift my praises high. Till the darkness turns to dawn I lift my praises. I choose to worship, I choose You now. Amen.*

### You can hear the rest of that prayer/song here:  <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdtLxbtIicA>