

# HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

## Connect Resource

**Dates:** Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2024

**Message written by:** Ps Jessen

**Key text/s for this campaign:** Isaiah 60:1-5

*“Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.  
See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the Lord rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.  
Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
“Lift up your eyes and look about you:  
All assemble and come to you;  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters are carried on the hip.  
Then you will look and be radiant,  
your heart will throb and swell with joy;  
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,  
to you the riches of the nations will come.*

## MSG Version

At the beginning of this year I was sitting reading this scripture in my message bible and verse 5 really stood out to me - it felt like a personal encouragement to me for our church for the year ahead as we 'Prepare the way for the Lord.'

I'd like to read the MSG version... and for you to imagine God saying this directly to our church.

## Isaiah 60:5 (MSG) – People Returning for the Reunion

*Look up! Look around!*

*Watch as they gather, watch as they approach you:  
Your sons coming from great distances,  
your daughters carried by their nannies.  
When you see them coming you'll smile—big smiles!  
Your heart will swell and, yes, burst!  
All those people returning by sea for the reunion,  
a rich harvest of exiles gathered in from the nations!*

**A few things I felt encouraged in for us as a church as I read this scripture-**

I felt encouraged to –

### 1. Picture the reunion!

The end of verse 5 says:

*All those people returning by sea for **the reunion**,  
a **rich harvest** of exiles gathered in from the nations!*

We need to picture it ~ Imagine what this reunion looks like, get it in your heart. In our 'We See' vision picture... a great return of sons & daughters and a great harvest of new believers.

You might love your location because of its smaller local community, but our heart and God's heart is that these locations would **continue to grow** and reach **many more people** in the community. We also have **Connect Groups**, and this is that smaller local community for you! Connect Group is actually what makes **a larger church feel small** - In a CG you're seen and known and in community with others.

## 2. Watch as they approach us!

The beginning of verse 5 says:

*Look up! Look around!*

*Watch as they gather, **watch as they approach you***

In January 2021, I had a vision of our church and large numbers of people returning (that had once been here with us). I wrote in my journal the words I heard alongside the picture...“**A great return** of people is coming! People who once followed Jesus, who once attended C3 and have fallen away. **Sons and daughters of this house** are returning! A GREAT RETURN is on the way! The people who are returning will be on fire and carry us forward! **Salvation** is coming to Sydney, to our church! God is getting ready to send a mighty breath from heaven that will stir SALVATION.”

As a church this year we are focused on ‘**preparing the way for the Lord**’, we are ‘raising valleys and lowering mountains’ - SO THAT God’s glory can be revealed. We want to make the pathway to Jesus CLEAR. We want to be a church that truly reflects God’s heart and nature, a church that God trusts.

## 3. You’ll smile – big smiles!

Verse 5 says:

*When you see them coming you’ll smile – **big smiles!***

*Your heart will swell and, yes, burst!*

This is our **response** to returners...

Ps Alex often reminds us that people are coming back, people are returning - so don’t be weird! Just hug them and say good to see you!

This part of the scripture really felt like a reassuring promise to me, that we WILL SEE them return. So, we should be expectant, we should be inviting people that were here once, we should be excited and be full of joy at their return!

## 4. Exiles gathered from the nations

This is the WHO. People who are lost, looking for a home, people that are rejected, broken, all at sea, from all different backgrounds, nations, experiences, religions.

We need to have eyes for the lost.

We need to have eyes for people different from us.

And in Sydney we need to have eyes for the nations - the nations of the world live in Sydney. Sydney is multi-ethnic and we are a multi-ethnic church.

## Connect Questions

### Mother's Day

#### Connect Group Discussion Questions:

##### Gather:

- Things can be a bit awkward for those returning to church, or overwhelming for those coming for the first time. It can help to have people from your connect group help make returning people, or new people, feel welcome. It's ok to ask for practical help from your cg, not just prayer. Discuss this as a connect group, and the importance of why we are to be welcoming and inclusive of people coming to church. 2. Discuss how you could be more intentional as a cg each weekend in welcoming returning or new people.
- Share some of the questions you can ask a new or renewing churchgoer to help them find Jesus. (For example: What did you think of the message? Was there anything you didn't understand?)

##### Grow:

- Are there blockages in your heart making welcoming the prodigals and new people to church difficult? Spend some time with God this week, reflecting on and addressing/removing them.
- In Matthew 23:37 & Luke 13:34, Jesus compared Himself to a mother hen -protective & nurturing. Are there qualities from all the mother-figures in your life (biological & spiritual) that you would like to practice towards others?

##### Go:

- Who are the exiles we are praying for to return? Pray together for them and if appropriate, put their first names in your phone so that you can continue to pray for these people during the week.
- Who are the people from many nations that you know in your neighbourhood or work? Is someone on your heart to pray for and invite to church?