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# Freedom and Paradox

## Lent 3

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*CRS staff distributing nutrition parcels.*

### READING - ISAIAH 55:1-9

“Come, all you who are thirsty,  
come to the waters;  
and you who have no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without cost.  
Why spend money on what is not bread,  
and your labour on what does not satisfy?  
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,

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and you will delight in the richest of fare.  
Give ear and come to me;  
listen, that you may live.  
I will make an everlasting covenant with you,  
my faithful love promised to David.  
See, I have made him a witness to the peoples,  
a ruler and commander of the peoples.  
Surely you will summon nations you know not,  
and nations you do not know will come running to you,  
because of the Lord your God,  
the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has endowed you with splendour.”  
Seek the Lord while he may be found;  
call on him while he is near.  
Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the unrighteous their thoughts.  
Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will freely pardon.  
“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,”  
declares the Lord.  
“As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

## REFLECT

This passage is full of rich language and imagery reflecting the riches that are on offer from God to every human being. It is also rather paradoxical. How can we buy without money? Why do we pursue things that don't satisfy? We are to turn to the Lord and seek him but we can never understand God's ways, his dealings with humankind.

There are echoes too of Jesus' lament from last week. Here we read of the consequences of responding or not to God's invitation to 'come'. We have no means of paying and yet we receive abundantly so that we may live.

We are invited to 'come to the waters' and to 'come buy wine and milk'. Each of these meets a human need. Having clean, fresh water is a fundamental requirement for our bodies. Without it we die and without enough we thirst. We also thirst after things which meet other needs and desires.

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'The world is so hungry for God that God could only come as a piece of bread. We so long for joy the God comes into the world in the form of intoxication, that risky thing called wine.'

Ghandi

Milk can also quench our thirst but in addition it brings nourishment and helps to build and maintain strong bodies. And then we come to wine

Our physical and spiritual needs are intertwined and both need to be met if we are to flourish, which is why CRS provides a nutrition programme which provides for the basic needs of some of the many most disadvantaged in Kolkata. Through its schools and women's empowerment centres it distributes nutritious food sometimes in the form of school lunches or through food parcels given out weekly or monthly.

## RESPOND

The cost of providing meals for 500 children over the next year is £7,500, and CRS urgently requires support from local and international partners to maintain this vital initiative. Please will you give today and help ensure children get the nutrition they need to not only survive, but grow and thrive?

<https://www.cathedralreliefservice.net/donate/appeals/>

## PRAYER

Lord of life, we pray for fullness of life.

For ourselves.

For others.

For our world.

We resolve to live life in all its fullness.

We seek to enable others to live life in all its fullness too. Amen.

For further information about the work of CRS go to: <https://www.cathedralreliefservice.net>

For further information about Friends of CRS UK go to: <https://www.cathedralreliefservice.net/supporters/ukfriends/>