

**Text: Isaiah 25:1-12**

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Brightons Parish Church**

## **Message**

**Let us take a moment to pray before we think about God's Word.**

**May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be true and pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.**

**What did you feel when you woke up on Wednesday morning and saw that the US election was still rumbling on and hadn't been decided? What did you feel when it seemed a legal battle might ensue? What have you been feeling as the events of this year have developed, improved, worsened and continue to change and roll on? What did you feel when you heard of terrorism in France, racism in America, or conflicts around the world?**

**I wonder, in the face of any – and all – of these events, did you feel any hope? Has your level of hope begun to wane as 2020 plays itself out, particularly if you've faced a difficult year personally?**

**Ancient Israel was no** stranger to difficulty and was only too familiar with losing people in war, as they suffered from invasion and defeat time and time again. I wonder, what did they feel? What was their level of hope? We may be two and a half thousand years on from Isaiah's time, but we still live in a world full of oppression, arrogance, hatred, conflict, death and mourning. So, the message from Isaiah is just as relevant and powerful for us as it was in his day.

**Isaiah came with good news for the Lord's people, good news that God has a plan. He said:**

**'Lord, you are my God;**

**I will exalt you and praise your name,**

**for in perfect faithfulness**

**you have done wonderful things,**

**things planned long ago.'** (v1)

**God has a plan, a plan for wonderful things, deeds beyond mere human ability, and this echoes that promise made in chapter 9 of a king who would be 'Wonderful Counsellor and Mighty God' (Isa. 9:7).**

**Yet, this plan will not simply be for ancient Israel, because from a heart of overflowing love and grace God says through Isaiah that:**

**‘On this mountain [He] will prepare  
a feast of rich food for all peoples...’ (v6)**

**All peoples! Everyone is invited to the feast. Everyone is invited to share in the good and abundant provision of God. So, what will this include? **Isaiah goes on:****

**‘On this mountain he will destroy  
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,  
the sheet that covers all nations;  
he will swallow up **death for ever.****

**The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears  
from all faces;  
he will remove his people’s disgrace  
from all the earth.**

**The Lord has spoken.’ (v7-8)**

**God's plan, the plan He invites everyone to share in, is a promise to utterly destroy death itself. God holds out hope to all the nations so that they can share in that day, when it comes, when He will pass from one individual to the next and wipe away each tear.**

**It is a grand plan and a grand promise, but not a wishful promise – **it is a promise** guaranteed and verified as truly available to each of us, because that promised King came, it was Jesus and Jesus truly rose from the dead, confirming **His claim**:**

**“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.” (John 11:25)**

**Friends, we have such a hope, offered to us by God Himself, but how do we share in that hope? How do we take up the invitation of God? **Isaiah says:****

**‘Surely this is our God;**

**we trusted in him, and he saved us.**

**This is the Lord, we trusted in him;**

**let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.’ (v9)**

**Those who trust, and continue to trust, in the Lord will share in this promise, will share in this hope. Yet, on the other hand, if we, like Moab, that country which bordered ancient Israel, if we are like them and with pride keep our distance, then we will not share that hope and not share that promise. **For it’s not enough** to belong to a group who stand on the threshold of God’s kingdom, or to have known some who crossed over into it. So, it’s not**

enough to watch this service today, or simply come to church, or have your name down as member – it's not enough! You could do all that and more besides and still be on the threshold, you could still be holding back and not trusting the Lord, not trusting His promise and plan.

**Friends, is your** trust in the Lord? Is your trust in His promise? If your hope is low, if it's beginning to wane, then renew your trust in the Lord. Come to Him afresh, confess where you've put your hope in other things, and talk with Him about how you want to put your trust in Him and His promises alone.

Isaiah came with good news, good news that would have inspired hope. But might it also have inspired bewilderment? **For Isaiah also said:**



**'...strong peoples will honour [the Lord];  
cities of ruthless nations will revere [Him].' (v3)**

**Isaiah is saying that the very people who have invaded and defeated Israel, these same people will be invited to the feast, to this glorious hope. Can you imagine what the people might have felt? Is it any wonder that they might have felt bewilderment? How could God do such a thing? How could He forgive? How is it enough that they simply repented? Where is justice?**

**Isaiah, will respond to such questions, but not for many chapters. So, let us instead turn to the New Testament, where read:**

**'God offered [Jesus], so that by his blood he should become the means by which people's sins are forgiven**

**through their faith [their trust] in him. God did this in order to demonstrate that he **is righteous**. In the past he was patient and overlooked people's sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, in order to demonstrate his righteousness. In this way God shows that he himself is righteous and that he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.’ (Romans 3:25-26)**

**God doesn't overlook sin – not yours, not mine, nor the tyrant or the oppressor – every one will be judged, there will be justice. But anyone who puts their trust in the death of Jesus will be forgiven, and they will be invited to the banquet, where together they can rejoice in the love and grace of God, and there be unity.**

**You may wonder**, if this is possible. You may wonder, if this is just fanciful nonsense. So, let me play you an old recording, wherein Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian, who was captured and sent to a concentration camp by the Nazi's, shares a little of her story.

**(PLAY VIDEO)**

**In Jesus Christ**, we have hope that God has a plan, including to conquer death itself, and in this same Jesus Christ, we see that there will be justice, but there will also be mercy, if we will but trust in Jesus. Friends, I pray that you will know the scandalous forgiveness and grace of God, such that you have hope for the storms of life, and love for the least, the last and the lost, no matter who they be, or what they may have done. May it be so. Amen.

**We close our time together with our final hymn,**

***HYMN MP-1334 My hope is built on nothing less***