

April 2020

Dear neighbours,

There is a well-known poem about a castaway on a desert island:-

“I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute.
From the land all around to the sea
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
O Solitude, where are the charms
That Nature has seen in thy face?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms
Than reign in this horrible place.”

It is a “horrible place” to have everything and be all alone.

The Lord Jesus Christ said it is a “horrible place” to have everything and in the process lose one’s soul. “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8.36-37)

Of course, we shall never have everything. What is meant is that we shall have all our heart’s desire and that will not be enough. For human nature never has enough. Take that to its logical conclusion and if we had the whole wide world we should still not be satisfied.

As to the universal discontent, the Bible says, “There are three things that are never satisfied, yea, four things say not, It is enough. The grave, and the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water; and fire that saith not, It is enough” (Proverbs 30.15-16). The generation of the human race is never satisfied; and that’s how bad it looks.

Jesus explains the issues in this parable:- “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12.16-21).

What does the Lord Jesus Christ mean with that telling phrase “rich toward God”?

That we can be rich without God. It would be a fundamental mistake, because the ground brings forth plentifully because God is Creator. But, yes, we may leave Him out of the reckoning. There are riches in God’s estimation that no earthly riches can provide. Of sins forgiven and acceptance with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. Of eternal life. Of deliverance from corruption into perfection. Of friendship with Him and guidance by Him.

What does the Lord Jesus Christ mean with that equally telling phrase “thy soul shall be required”? It means that after death there is judgment (Hebrews 9.27-28). “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many”. It means that there is a requirement to give account of our lives at a time of which we are unaware. Whatever else we are in control of, we are not in control of this. We cannot abscond.

Precisely because we have all sinned, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3.16). Knowing that our souls will be required at a set time, for our times are in His hand (Psalm 31.15), He has Himself provided in Jesus Christ, by faith in Him, that all our sins and shortfall might be atoned for. And that, without sacrificing justice, pardon may be extended to the repentant guilty sinner.

We are, of course, in control of what we do with our lives. We are in control of whether we serve the Lord or deny Him. Our lives, though "inaugurated" by our parents, owe everything to a creation into which we are born.

We can buy many things, but not our soul's acceptance with God. We either receive it as the gift of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, or we do not receive it at all.

"They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him...that he should still live for ever and not see corruption. For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others. Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations...when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him" (Psalm 49. 6-11,17).

It comes across as a very dismal end. Reputation is of no avail when it really counts. But faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is joyful, is relevant when it most matters and answers all the needs of the human heart.

These are serious issues.

You are always welcome to attend our Sunday services at 10.45am and 2pm. If you wanted to hear about these things on a more consistent basis you would find it helpful to come regularly. Of course, changing a lifestyle, particularly a Sunday one, is not easy. It may come to be a matter of what you consider to be priorities. We would invite you to go for it.

Yours affectionately,