

FRISTON BAPTIST CHURCH

MILL ROAD, FRISTON, SAXMUNDHAM

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August 2006

To the church's neighbours in and around Friston, and also our personal neighbours in and about Aldeburgh, Leiston and Saxmundham.

Dear neighbours,

We are not the first people to have felt desperately lonely. David, king David, in his early days before he became king, cried out "no man cared for my soul" (Psalm 142.4).

It is not simply a 21st century complaint. It is a human complaint. No one cares about me!

What did David do? "I cried unto the LORD with my voice (that is, out loud)...I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble" (Psalm 142. 1-2). He goes on, "I looked....and there was no man that would know me" (Psalm 142.4).

(I always give Bible references so that you can verify what I say. Or find the place to get help yourself and read a little more. If you don't have a Bible I can get you one free of charge. It is the world's senior book!)

Loneliness. Opposition. Criticism. Reaping the consequences of what we have sown. Bereavement. Terminal illness. All these things are part of lonely human misery down the years.

At times we feel so alone. As if no one else ever went through it before, who could help us.

Maybe there are those who could help. Maybe not. Maybe our affairs are so private, so complicated, so embarrassing that there is no way we are going to share our heart's feelings.

Then cut out the middlemen, and go straight to God, like David did. Pour out your complaint before Him. Say to him, "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise thy name...for thou shalt deal bountifully with me" (Psalm 142.7).

The Bible always portrays the Lord Jesus Christ as the friend of sinners, and the lover of our souls. Our souls are capable of being distinguished from our bodies. (Sometimes when the Bible speaks of a soul it means the whole person.) But the soul, our real, enduring, eternal being, can be distinguished from the body and is, indeed, separated from it at death. Jesus loves us as whole people, of course. But it is the condition of the soul which he, as the true Physician has come to heal:-

"He comes the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of His grace
To enrich the humble poor."

He gave a new beginning to very many people whose stories are told in the four gospels. And He will give a new beginning to you. Pour out your complaint to Him. Begin with complaints if you like (He takes us as we are) but you will find, if He aids you with His Spirit, that He will lead you to bring other things before him.

If you are to know God, at some point you must **get to know** Him. And the Bible shows us that this is done as, spirit to spirit, we cry out and confess our need and our sin and He shows us His remedy. He has made an atonement for the sin of His people; and we will be numbered among His people if we cast ourselves upon Him.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1.9).

I am saddened by the political correctness which nowadays deems that the inmates of our prisons should not hear the gospel because of a multifaith approach. Should those who have offended be without the hope and the light of the world? Or, likewise, the children in our schools. Do not children go through many trying experiences, just like adults, and need to know the greatest friend of all? Or that passers-by should not hear open-air preaching. Their normal timetables would not expose them to the one message they need. Once society allowed freedom to declare and debate these things. But that freedom is fast being eroded. And then where will the lonely, desperate sinner be?

Now, of course, the preaching of the gospel may give offence to those who do not believe it. But then so may the declaration of Islamic faith. It doesn't mean we shouldn't have the opportunity of hearing it. In all these things we can choose not to listen. But the opportunity is there. People do not always necessarily want to remain in that in which they were brought up.

Christians make no apology that the claims of Jesus are exclusive. How else could He be the world's only Saviour. We endeavour to challenge you with these things, but we do not attempt to force you. "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14.6). "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4.12). To his disciples, Jesus said, "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you because they have not known the Father, nor me" (John 16.3). These are exclusive claims. But then Islam makes exclusive claims. As do many others.

Without this freedom, I say again, where would the lonely, desperate sinner be?

Denied the opportunity to hear of the wonderful, loving Saviour who alone could cleanse, give a new beginning, forgive sins, bestow eternal life. Denied by people in high office and enforcers who do not care for our souls. They do not care if we live or die, or even know of us.

But there is one who does:-

"One there is above all others
Well deserves the name of Friend;
His is love beyond a brother's
Costly, free, and knows no end:
They who once His kindness prove
Find it everlasting love.

Which of all our friends to save us
Would consent to shed his blood?
But our Jesus died to have us
Reconciled in Him to God:
This was boundless love indeed!
Jesus is a Friend in need.

A passage from the Bible is taught at each of our worship services, on Sundays at 1045 and 1400 hrs and on Tuesdays at 1930. These are not private services and you would be made most welcome. It will cost you nothing (though there is a collection to which there is no embarrassment in not contributing) and there is no obligation to return (though we would love you to). More is taught week by week than can possibly be conveyed in these neighbourhood letters.

Yours sincerely,