

Friston Baptist Church

Mill Road, Friston, Saxmundham, IP17 1PH

February 2007

To our neighbours near the church in Friston village and our neighbours near where we live as individuals.

Dear neighbours,

The preacher, known as John the Baptist, who was sent to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ asks the Lord God what he is to say; how he is to begin. The answer? "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40. 6,8).

He is to remind his hearers that they are mortal. It is the first task of a Christian preacher. He is to tell them that the Bible's answer to life's questions stands the test of time.

And why are we mortal, condemned to die? Because of one man's sin. Adam's. It is not unfair, though you might think so at first; because every subsequent person has inherited Adam's rebellion and disobedience. It is not shown by doing the same thing as he did but his attitude of rebellion is definitely there.

So two things. We inherit (we cannot help it) a sinful nature. And, secondly, as a result, we do sinful things. And for that we are most definitely responsible.

None of us deserves to be saved or to go to heaven. Unless a massive change happens, we would spoil the place immediately. God will not have sinners with Him in heaven.

It rules everybody out. If we've not actually committed sin yet, we have a sinful nature that will break out sooner or later. If we're honest, we can't remember a time when we were free from sin.

If we are to be saved, if guilty sinners are to be saved, then their Saviour has to accomplish two things. Remove the rebellion of our sinful nature. Forgive our actual sins.

Christ is fully God. As God He hates sin and never, ever, committed a sin. As man, born of a virgin, He possesses human nature. A human nature without sin.

Adam possessed a nature at first without sin; but with the potentiality to sin. And he did actually sin. Jesus Christ possesses a human nature incapable of sin. That's a radically different matter.

Every believer in Him becomes in Him. He represents such as put their trust in Him by repenting of their sin. They become identified with His new nature and His perfections are accounted theirs. Their sins are laid on Him and His sinlessness removes their guilt in the sight of God and the sinner is pardoned. He takes the place of the condemned sinner (like you and me) and God acquits the sinner of his sin. Christ is our substitute in this whole matter.

All this is because, on the cross, Christ made an atonement for the sins of everyone who, whether before His time or afterwards (like now), believes in the power of His atonement to bring them to God the Father and make them acceptable to Him.

Genuine repentance is the key which opens the door. "Repent!" was the first word of John the Baptist in public (Matthew 3.2). His job was to prepare the people to recognize and believe in their Saviour when He appeared on the stage of history.

The first word of Jesus Christ's outdoor ministry was the same. "Repent" (Matthew 4.17).

Together with the forgiveness of sins, Christ promises eternal life (beginning at the moment of repentance) and His presence in the life of every believer, by His Spirit, every day. These blessings outweigh every other; or all of them put together. "What shall it profit a man (or woman), 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).

Now we may have to do battle with other issues in our minds. For instance, Was Adam real? Christ speaks as if he was. His whole argument about the sanctity of marriage (Mark 10.6-9) turns on the reality of God's instruction concerning Adam in Genesis 2.24.

Is the Bible true? Those who study it longest and hardest become increasingly satisfied that it is. It describes "many infallible proofs" (Acts 1.3). Ultimately, it is a matter of faith and of personal judgment. It differs right at its commencement from the evolutionary construction of events. But nobody was there at the beginning, so whose side do you take? It is a matter of faith and of judgment.

It goes on to differ from conventional wisdom at many points. So, again, you ask yourself which is more likely to be right? That which comes from God or man? That which urges to truth and goodness, or a life style which says "do what you like"? That which calls faith into play (why do we have the inbuilt capacity to exercise faith if there is nothing it can latch on to?) or that which leaves us to our own devices in a wide, wide world?

Well I can't deal with all the issues except over many letters, which is what I try to do.

But I do encourage you to seek the Lord. Of spiritual things the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Seek and ye shall find" (Matthew 7.7). In life, you don't always find when you look for something, but the Lord Jesus Christ said you will -if you seek spiritually. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6.33) - that is the necessities of life previously mentioned in Matthew 6.31. "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29.13).

We invite you to visit the church website at www.fristonbaptistsuffolk.org.uk. You will find there explanations of things in the Bible which you may find helpful in directing you to eternal salvation. For the holy scriptures are able to make you wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3.15).

Yours sincerely,