

Sunday Sermon 3rd December 2017 Caversham Baptist.

What are you waiting for and are you ready for it?

Are you looking forward Christmas or dreading it.

At work on Friday one of my work mates said nearly Christmas we need to start singing Christmas carols!!

First Sunday in Advent 2017, Christmas is fast approaching the end of the world is near, no sorry the end of the year is near! Though the way some people seem to be acting and requesting and wanting you would think that perhaps the end was nigh as so much is wanted to be done before the end!

There is a book on our bookshelf entitled, “when all plans fail” It goes through the various items and issues that people face when disaster strikes, with lists of gear, food, supplies etc that will be needed in the first few days and perhaps weeks until outside help arrives. Written by a person who has spent considerable time in areas of disaster and recovery, seeing first hand what is needed what external agencies were and most importantly were not able to help with.

When all plans fail, are you ready?

What are you waiting for and are you ready for it?

What are we most looking forward to? Are we preparing for it or just hoping it will work out? What if that which we wait for is delayed? What then, and how long do we tolerate the delay?

Isaiah 64:1-9 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

64 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down,
so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

2 as when fire kindles brushwood
and the fire causes water to boil—

to make your name known to your adversaries,
so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect,
you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

4 From ages past no one has heard,
no ear has perceived,
no eye has seen any God besides you,
who works for those who wait for him.

5 You meet those who gladly do right,
those who remember you in your ways.
But you were angry, and we sinned;
because you hid yourself we transgressed.[b]

6 We have all become like one who is unclean,
and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth.

We all fade like a leaf,
and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.
7 There is no one who calls on your name,
or attempts to take hold of you;
for you have hidden your face from us,
and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.
8 Yet, O Lord, you are our Father;
we are the clay, and you are our potter;
we are all the work of your hand.
9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord,
and do not remember iniquity forever.
Now consider, we are all your people.

Can you hear the longing in the prophets words?!

Longing for God to reveal Himself and to act. There is so much going wrong, injustice abounds, corruption becomes a daily part of life, the have's get more the have not's lose the little they do have. Daily we read or hear about another wrong another broken relationship another tragedy, political intrigue scandal, promises broken, or unrealistic ones made!

Our faith is rubbish, and the skies seem silent, where O God are you, can you not come and show all these people who you are? That you are the one in control?!

You did it in the past you showed yourself in power deliverance from Egypt, revelation on Mount Sinai, the conquest of the land from Jericho onwards. You spoke through the prophets and acted through David, you gave wisdom to Solomon and heard the cries of your people, when they waited on you, but now? Nothing!

Oh that you would act again and show the Babylonians who is in charge, that you would show the nations of the world who is in control! That our faith our lives would not be a laughing stock and held in derision. Make your name known again, make it great again, judge the nations again.

No other god is like you no one has heard, no ear perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him...

But you were angry and we sinned

we have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deed are like a filthy rag.
There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you

Yet Lord you are our Father, we are the clay, you are the potter we are all the work of your hands.

Longing for God to show up and make it plain to those around us that he is God Almighty that He would bring his judgment to bear on the nations and peoples so that they would know who is God that He exists and that he is not silent!

Yet if God does that then he also reveals in power and glory and majesty and judgment on the people of God, it leads to a realisation an awareness of our own lack of faith our own inadequacy our own

sinfulness our own unrighteousness before Him.

Woe is me for I am a man undone cries Isaiah at the vision of the throne room of God and the of God sitting on the throne.

Do not let God speak to us or we will surely die! This is Israel's response to God's talking to them out of the cloud at the dedication of the tabernacle at Mount Sinai.

There is a natural instinctive response when confronted with the full glory and majesty of God to realise that despite the best efforts that we have to be good, just, righteous and pure we are a long way of the mark!

There is a reality and soberness in this prayer of Isaiah's.

A great longing for God to act as He has done in the past so that all will know who God is.

Leading straight from that longing is a recognition of how far God's own people and how far the prophet himself has strayed from God's ways,

there is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you;

for you have hidden your face from us and delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

Sin this turning away from God has serious consequences.

But that is not the end he does not stay wallowing in a hopeless place.

Yet you are our Father

we are the clay you are the potter,

we are all the work of you hand

do not be exceedingly angry and do not remember our iniquity forever

Now consider we are all your people.

Isaiah has moved through from longing for God to show up, to knowing if He did that judgment would also fall on him and the nation, to sounding a note of hope and faith, that God is indeed our Father, that we are to moulded by Him, that he will act in His time, not ours, that we can and should continue to petition God our Father for all that wrong, injustice and evil that we see in the world, the closing verse of the prayer is just that

After all this, will you restrain yourself, O Lord?

Will you keep silent, and punish us so severely?

No the answer has to be from scripture, No God will not keep silent No he will not hide his face forever, and he has not he has spoken a final Word and He has acted in time and space, he has broken in as he did in the beginning, to the prophets of ancient times, the patriarchs of Israel, to the prophets and in the right place and time according to the scriptures he spoke his Word, and that Word is what was longed for and waited for and prayed for, the Messiah Jesus Christ was born. He came and his advent we will celebrate in a few short weeks. In Christ Jesus we have God's answer to the cry of the prophets and the longing of the children of God. In Christ who came as one of us lived among us then in sinlessness went to the cross for our sin, to bear that penalty, because of our sin take our death so that we might live and live life to the full! That is the God's answer, his ultimate response. The final Word, but it does not end with Christ hanging on the cross one more victim of and unjust and cruel world. Because he was the sinless lamb of God the one human who lived who was without sin, who died in our place God raised him to life on the third day he has ascended to the Father. Death could not hold him down! Death where is your sting!

Mark 13:24-37 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Coming of the Son of Man

24 “But in those days, after that suffering,

the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light,

25 and the stars will be falling from heaven,

and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. **27** Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **29** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he[a] is near, at the very gates. **30** Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

The Necessity for Watchfulness

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Beware, keep alert;[b] for you do not know when the time will come. **34** It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. **35** Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, **36** or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. **37** And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

There is another advent another coming of Jesus Christ that we wait for that is longed for and implored for, and that is the second coming the coming of Christ in the clouds of glory when every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! At that time there will be an end of injustice there will be an end of suffering an end of evil, an end of death!

That ending this second coming this conclusion of all history as we have known it brings into focus and shapes how we see and celebrate the first coming, otherwise we are in danger of reducing the remembering of the first coming to sentimental party time, rather than the definitive word of God spoken and acted in our world! We empty the celebration of Christmas from its full and final conclusion and hope, that God in Christ will right the wrongs, will bring justice to bear, will grant mercy and grace to sinners who call on him in faith. It is this second coming this second advent that from the time of Christ until now the

people of God have longed, the martyrs of God cry out for, that the whole of creation groans while waiting for.

A community lament not just an individual one, is Isaiah's prayer for there are times to come together and cry out to God as a community of His people, for our world our nation, our community. Crying out to the God who is there and is not silent.

For we still need the advent of Christ and the surety that the powers of this world are not all that there is! Or else we end up placing our hope for a better world in institutions, or in governments, and politicians who even with the best intentions in the world will not be able to save or bring about a world that is without sin and all its ugly consequences! Without Christ his first coming and the hope of His second come, without the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives, molding us like clay into the image of God's son we would not be saved, we would not be righteous before God, we would be in reality lost without hope, fools in a foolish world, hoping for a dream that would never come, trying to make sense out of a senseless and meaningless world and life!

Christ did not arrive in this world long ago to help people be a little niceer, to encourage a few week's worth of charitable giving to Tear fund or food bank. No the Christ of God came to make straight every crooked way, to right every wrong, to upend every injustice and reconcile all things to himself!

May we be ever watchful this advent and Christmas season, looking and working for the breaking in of