

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 20

Please visit our website for the KBC spoken word Thought for the Day

<https://www.kingtonbaptistchurch.org/>

Churches to open for ‘private prayer and meditation’

From 15th June the government will allow places of worship to open for ‘private prayer and meditation’. It’s our understanding that the *congregation* is the church; our building simply a place that allows us to meet together for fellowship, prayer, praise and preaching – that private prayer does not require any special building. For KBC – and many other ‘faith communities’ – the government’s announcement offers no real change. Sadly for us the rules of lockdown continue to apply as they have during the last number of weeks. While we keep the situation under constant review, the pastor and deacons agree that our church building should remain closed.

I could comment on the irrational and inconsistent decision that ‘non-essential’ shops will re-open but not Churches for congregational worship – but I won’t! Nonetheless, we should be mindful of the serious situation we are in, with the government prohibiting the right to freedom of worship.

Conflict, chaos and confusion

These are deeply turbulent times. It is vital that we understand what the gospel as to say on the issues of the day. The issues at the heart of these upheavals are not outside the scope of the gospel. The Word of God speaks directly to guide us in our responses to the situations developing in our society and more widely.

Martin Luther King wisely said that ‘Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter’.

The parting words of Jesus to the disciples were that they ‘go into all the world and make disciples of all nations’. The promise Jesus gave ‘I am with you...until the end of the ages’ (Matthew 28.19-20) means that this commission applies to us too, and will until the end of time. The gospel is for all nations and peoples; heaven is for all nations and peoples without exception or distinction; the redeemed are ‘from every tongue and people and nation’. (Revelation 5.9) In the kingdom of heaven ‘Jew and Gentile, bond and free, male and female’ are one, equal and united. (Galatians 3.28)

God is not a racist!

Jesus forcefully made the point that God welcomes all – especially those who are most excluded. The very idea of a ‘good’ Samaritan was a contradiction to those who heard Jesus – because they considered a Samaritan to be outside the scope of God’s grace simply because of a Samaritan’s racial disqualification. The idea of sending Mary Magdalene to the apostles as the witness of the risen Christ was unthinkable to the disciples – because, for them, no woman could be considered as a reliable witness to anything.

Now if God welcomes, uses, blesses, redeems and loves all races, classes, genders, colours and conditions of men and women so must I. ‘Equality’ is not ours to give. It is simply to be recognised and acted on as the God-given status of each human person, because each human person equally is ‘made in the image and likeness of God’. (Genesis 1.27)

To act on this truth goes far beyond simply recognising this equality, it goes so far as to love as he loves: *‘He himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world’*. (1 John 2.2) *‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.’* (1 John 4.10-11)