

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH

ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 39

We generally think of four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But there are those who, with good reason, refer to Isaiah as 'The Gospel according to Isaiah'. Some 800 years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah prophesies the birth and ministry of Jesus so richly that it's as if the heart of the other four Gospels was already pre-echoed by Isaiah.

There is Isaiah's calling, chapter 6.1-12, with the unforgettable words: '*Here am I, send me*'. This is like the eternal decision within the Trinity, before the worlds were made, that the Son of God would come to us – it's as if from eternity the Word, the Son of God, had said: '*Here am I, send me*'.

Then there's the wonderful description of what the Messiah would do once he had come into the world. In Isaiah chapter 61 we have the very words Jesus read in the synagogue to explain and announce his ministry. Luke has recorded the incident for us:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." Jesus rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4.18)

We live with human need; for which God has provided the answer; we are called to carry that answer to the world; our part is to be available – to be ready, to do what we can, go where he sends, speak words of hope, live to serve and help others. This is to obey Jesus when he says, '*Follow me*'.

The command of Jesus to those who trust him wasn't simply 'listen to me' or even 'believe in me' but **follow** me! Of course we can only follow him when we listen to him and when we believe in him – but listening and believing aren't the only thing – they are the beginning; **following** him is the continuation.

The path he walked was the path of self-denial, denial of self-interest, even of family. As we follow him we may find a fork in the road, where we must choose: Jesus or family – Jesus or friends – Jesus or wealth.

The Kingdom of God is to be our priority. Not to make our worries over self and self-protection and self-preservation and provision our first concern – but to leave all those things in the care of our loving heavenly Father.

His call to deny self and self-interest is to leave us free to live for others to support, care, help, encourage and provide for others. We'll have plenty of opportunities this winter for doing all these things!

Brother sister let me serve you...