

KINGTON BAPTIST CHURCH ONLINE NOTICE BOARD – 55

Wise men worship Jesus

Catastrophe. My dictionary tells me that a ‘catastrophe’ is ‘an event causing great damage or suffering’. So by any reckoning coronavirus has been a catastrophe. It is a catastrophe that has pushed nations and governments to their limits. We may have different views about the way that governments responded to this catastrophe. Some will consider that national governments have done ‘their best’. Others will think ‘their best’ has been an example of chaotic ineptitude. It’s not my intention to criticise a particular government. My purpose is different. I want to highlight how incapable all human governments are, indeed how incapable all human efforts are, to respond effectively to the evils we find in our fallen world.

The inability of the human race to respond adequately to the great problems the world faces is not new. It has been the human predicament since the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden – *‘disobedience that brought death into the world and all our woes’*. Which brings us to this:

The single most important truth we should recognise as the world struggles with the catastrophes we are facing – the truth we are witnessing is the *human inability to solve the problems sin creates*. This is the big truth behind the world’s predicament – it leads to the Cross – to God’s remedy.

God prompted the Wise Men, sending them on their journey, by the light of a star. They saw a star but were enabled to respond to far more than they saw – they saw beyond the star. God used a star and their understanding of astronomy to guide them. Though what they saw they were guided by the Holy Spirit, of whom at this stage in their journey, and despite their wisdom, they knew nothing. When they reached Jerusalem God provided a clearer light to guide them – the light of Scripture, the prophecies of the Old Testament. These were the ways the Holy Spirit worked then and it is in these ways that he still works today to lead to Jesus. God speaks to us through the book of nature – the star – and his written Word – Scripture. And all the time it is the Holy Spirit who speaks and leads.

John Keble spoke of natural revelation in a hymn:

There is a book, who runs may read,
which heavenly truth imparts,
and all the lore its scholars need,
pure eyes and Christian hearts.

The works of God above, below,
within us and around,
are pages in that book, to shew
how God himself is found.

Thou, who hast given me eyes to see
and love this sight so fair,
give me a heart to find out thee,
and read thee everywhere.

Sin creates catastrophes. They are plain to see. We hear of them and read of them every day. We see the attempts of governments and human organisations to resolve these catastrophes. Day after day we are presented with eminent Professors and experts whose views and opinions flatly contradict each other and we are expected to deduce from these conflicting views 'the truth'. We are right to ask what successes human organisations and governments have had in eradicating the catastrophes of hunger, homelessness, war, want, inequality, injustice, repression, exploitation, disease and on and on. We hear the Minister of Health tell the nation 'Science will make us free!' Ignoring the fact that many of the worst of our problems have been created by 'science'! But despite such extravagant and disturbing optimism the problems persist. They persist in our own country and throughout the world. Whatever measures are taken they have had little impact in neutralising the effects on the environment and human life of the Serpent's fatal venom. The vaccine has been welcomed but we shouldn't imagine for one moment that a vaccine is the answer to the world's catastrophic problems. Not to mention the challenge of rolling-out this vaccine worldwide, or even country-wide.

God speaks to us through human kindness and human love. But he also speaks to us through human failures and human errors. What then is the answer? Where is a way out of this chaos? Is there a remedy for our foolish thinking and behaviour? Is there a remedy for human sin? Yes. Of course there is!

The wise men found the answer. They were led to the answer. The answer was not found in their human wisdom but in the wisdom of God. They were led by the wisdom of God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, to Jesus, lying in his mother's arms. This is foolishness to the world – but it is in truth the wisdom and power of God. The wise men worshipped him, with hearts filled with indescribable joy. Wise men worship Jesus! And to worship him is to serve him. To serve him is to serve others in the ways he has given us to follow and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is with us.

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the politician of the times? We can see that God has made foolish the wisdom of the world. For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of what we preach, to save those who believe. Jews look for signs, others trust in their wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, the Jews stumble at this, others think it's foolish, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. (1 Corinthians 1.20-25)

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our sins, has made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved! And he raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that throughout all ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. It is not a

reward for good works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us to be, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God already prepared to be the way we are to live. (Ephesians 2.4-10)

While evil men grow worse and worse, deceiving others and being deceived themselves (2 Timothy 3.13) we are looking for and bringing on the coming of the day of God, when the heavens will be dissolved in fire and the very substance of things will melt with fervent heat. We are looking for new heavens and a new earth, which God has promised will be a home for righteousness.

(2 Peter 3.12-14)

Horatius Bonar tells us of the ways of God in the hymn, *O, love of God:*

O wide embracing, wondrous love!
We read thee in the sky above,
We read thee in the earth below,
In seas that swell, and streams that flow.

We read thee best in him who came
To bear for us the cross of shame;
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, our death to die.