



July 19th

THE NEW SHOFAR

There is only one truth - Christ Jesus

The world can only know Christ if we proclaim Him

Why won't God smite the wicked and smooth life for the righteous?

This is surely one of those questions that has crossed the minds of most people, believers and unbelievers alike. Indeed, if God did smite the wicked the world's peoples would be falling over themselves to be baptised and to follow the Way of Christ. But that is not the way it works. God is working on the wicked, but smiting is not in His play book. He sent His only Son Jesus the Christ to break the hold darkness and sin can have on people.

The problem is that sin is just too enticing. It is so easy to fit into the world and to pursue those things that best fit our own desires, to prioritise those things that cause the fewest hiccups to the way we want to live. Sin is what enables us to justify just about any action or any failure to act. It is sin that corrupts our consciences and keeps us safe from the kind of radical Gospel living espoused by Jesus and demanded of us at our baptism.

What then is God doing about the wicked?

We are God's response to sin and wickedness. We collaborate in what God is doing in the world through our union together in Jesus Christ. He is the Lamb of God who was crucified that we might be free. And then being freed, we bring God's gift of freedom to the world.

That sounds daunting, but if Jesus can initiate that transformation through twelve imperfect sinners, He can surely manage the same kind of powerful missionary work through us. But this is surely the main point. The transformation of the world's human communities is something God alone can achieve. Sin is too firmly entrenched for it to be broken down by human wisdom, power and influence. God saves in Jesus, who is ministering through us.

Associated with this is a further divine Truth: It is only going to happen when we, the baptised Disciples of Christ, faithfully pursue the Way of Christ. Without affirming how Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6) nothing will change. In a world promoting an immeasurable range of "truths", which insists on the only way being 'my way', it is always going to be tough to live as a witness to the one Truth.

The Post-Covid world should be our new battleground

Covid is nature's way of snubbing its nose at the hubris and arrogance that dominates so much of human activities on earth. Our best and brightest are unable to stop it in its tracks. Our sharpest and most creative medical scientists and university boffins are at a loss at how to stop it. As Covid spreads, we find our economies in a downward spiral. Economists are in

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open conflict as to how far the markets will fall and just what the eventual end of the pandemic will mean for life beyond disease. Whatever that might look like, it will be a very different world with many people becoming disenchanted with the people in whom they had put so much faith and trust. In whom can they trust?

Therein is our mission opportunity. The world needs to find the face of the merciful Father who seeks us. They can find the Father only in the Son and find the Son only in and through the way we witness to the Gospel of love, by the way we live and speak in the world.

The gospel illuminates what it means to be fully human. It is when we pattern our lives on the self-giving love of Jesus that we begin to understand our own lives as being gifts to others, just as the “other” is God’s gift to us. The life and light we share is the life and light of the Trinity. That is who we are. In Christ we are caught up into the life of God Himself.

This new world is possible only – only – in Christ

We live in a world that is a supermarket for spiritualities and people are at a loss as to what is True. It is a world where the Church needs to proclaim the Truth of the Kingdom, the full Truth of the Gospel – whether or not it is fashionable. That Truth is simple: Jesus is the Son of God, born of Mary through the Spirit. He is truly God and fully man. He freely suffered death on the cross as a part of the Father’s saving activity in creation and so offers salvation as a possibility for all. God raised him from the dead and He appeared to many. This is *folly* and a *stumbling block* for some but is the very core of the Gospel for every Christian.

This is what we have to offer the Post-Covid world – an encounter with divine mercy. This encounter frees people from the whims and fancies of the material world, from the unending pursuit of constantly changing human desires and expectations. In Christ the world is freed from the burden of guilt, and the Western world today is being told we are guilty for all kinds of evils from the past down into the present. Who can free us from this burden? Christ.

Wrongdoing can be confessed, and forgiveness received through our relationship with Jesus Christ. The post-Covid world can become more fully human and can look forward to a future bright with hope – only in Christ. That hope is not to be found in any discovery of a drug that will give us immunity to Covid, as there will always be some new pandemic in the making. Nor is hope to be found in good financial governance by government and business leaders. Hope is not in technology, military spending, government handouts, Black Lives Matter marches, more people kneeling as a kind of confession to “white privilege” or stocking up in groceries or toilet paper. They will all pass. They will all collapse because it is not of God.

these transformations begin as mustard seeds, as yeast in a bread mix

We can now answer our opening question. God does not smite the wicked because our God is a God of mercy who desires the salvation of all. There is time before the End for people to repent and come to know, love and serve God. This is precisely where we collaborate with these Divine plans. Our vocation is *nothing less than* the conversion of the entire world, of people of *every race and tribe, people, language and nation*. To write this off as a pipe dream is to dismiss the power of Christ that is at its fullness in the Gospel fully and truly lived.

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