



**Trinity**

# THE NEW SHOFAR

*Unless we are born from God...*

*A holy seed is its stump and it will grow*

***Our God reigns, has always reigned and will reign forever and ever***

Today our Church begins a new life in the Spirit. Last week was Pentecost, a reminder of our empowerment by God the Holy Spirit for the works of God in our world. Now we begin to live out the pledges made during those festivities – to do the works of God. This is why our new year of discipleship begins with Trinity Sunday, a day when we place ourselves before the throne of God in submission to His divine authority.

This explains why Isaiah's ministry begins in the Heavenly throne room. The vision we have is one of splendour, might, glory and absolute power. What we see is God reign-**ing**. This is no empty throne. As Israel prepares for the horrors of being invaded by foreign nation and the worse fate of exile, they are reassured how even now, as the world begins to fall apart from them, God is reign-**ing**. What is happening to them is not a lack of oversight by the Covenant God of Israel. They are brought down by their own sins and sinful ways. This is what happens when you move beyond the love of God and pursue meaning and purpose in the powers and temptations of this world.

***Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me.***

It is only after he has experienced this vision does the divine call come to the prophet. Yahweh God invites a man, a prophet in this case, to collaborate in what the Almighty is doing in human history. However, it is a tough mission, a risking ministry and it can only be carried out by someone who has seen and experienced God reign-**ing**. Isaiah knows how his sinful ways make him unworthy of the position or the task at hand. He needs something more than what he brings to his calling or he will surely fail.

The beginning of mission is repentance – for individuals and for parish communities. It requires a painful confession of sin and a humble prostration before the throne of God. Without God reign-**ing** in us and through us, mission will not succeed and ministry never bear lasting fruit.

***Our mission is not to be shaped by the world but is determined by God***

The command God gives to Isaiah is devastating! The prophet is commissioned to speak in such a way that no one will finally understand what it is he is saying. Their

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eyes and ears will be useless, so dull and sightless that their minds will be clouded with confusion. As a result, their healing will be delayed. Sounds like a terrible judgment, one unworthy of God but in fact, what he is commanded to do is to preach a message making no sense to the Hebrew people. They have aligned themselves so closely with the mores and ambitions of the world, they no longer hear God speaking.

Isaiah is called upon to preach a message not designed to make their lives easier, their road smoother, or their responsibilities plainer. Everything will be more confusing and less certain, more demanding and less compromising. It will put them at odds with the secular world in which they are living and demand a discipline they had long abandoned before the pressures of a more “enlightened world”.

***The prophet is aware of just how difficult this will be***

Not surprisingly, that enthusiastic prophet of verse eight, the ready follower of the mighty Lord of the temple who is so anxious to do the divine work, now sounds very different in verse eleven once he has heard what God has in mind for him. Instead of *Here am I*, we now hear the prophet whinging, *How long, O Lord?*

His mission was not to be envied. He would preach this tough message until *cities are blasted without inhabitant, houses without people, and the land is completely shattered...* What God seeks to establish is a totally renewed and revitalised community of believers, one that remains faithful to God’s commands. Because it is so riddled with the ways of the world, its sinful structures need to be demolished, sins confessed and forgiven and a new way forward set in place.

***All is futile that is not born from above (born of God)***

It is Jesus in John’s Gospel who sets out for us the fundamental starting point to our new directions under the Holy Spirit. The language is clear. We need to be born *from above*. That is, our daily living must be guided and enlightened from the throne room of God, from the throne of the reign-*ing* God Himself. The Greek tells us that this being born is no one off moment of faith. It is a daily, moment by moment commitment to living in our world as Isaiah lived in his – with everything we do, think and say being en-lightened by the divine will.

Living under the reign of God and collaborating with the mission of God in our world today requires some basic spiritual renewals. We must listen to God, something that becomes possible only through our intimacy with Christ. Only through our striving to imitate Christ can we hear God’s will.

Unless we pray daily; without a daily encounter with the revealed Word of God in the Bible; living without regular and ongoing engagements with God and our faith community in the sacraments – our parish mission and our personal vocations as disciples will never bear lasting fruit, never feed the starving world with the enduring Bread of Life and bring upon ourselves the kind of fate that consumed Israel. Striving

to be *born from above* and living in the light of the heavenly throne room – that is our faith, our hope and our calling. Remember, God reassured Isaiah that *a holy seed is the stump*. For us, there is always hope, always new life from the stump of what had been.