



**June 20**

## ***THE NEW SHOFAR***

*We should never fear standing up and saying “No” when the world preaches a way alien to the ways of Christ*

***Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?***

It is an odd world in which we live today. All around us we see men and women filled with the wisdom of the world trying to re-educate us as to the meaning of truth. They strive to explain the meaning of life, why we are here and how we are ourselves gods. They want to pull down the trellis of Christian faith and traditions that has supported, sustained and shaped us for millennia, seeking to convince us how these things are outdated, corrupt and built on a false narrative about there being a God.

One cannot help but compare these sentiments with those uttered by the men and women of Babel. They too sought to build a tower that would grant them access into the heavens, enable them to be at one with God, be gods in their own right. Indeed, reading through the Bible we find this the greatest of all temptations and sins. To deny the role and place of God in creation and replace it with human ambitions.

***From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view***

The heading above is from St Paul and what he is saying is of absolute importance for all who follow Christ as disciples. All we do in life; everything we see and experience in this world must be viewed from the perspective of Christ. We must grow as men and women who have experienced salvation in Jesus Christ who died, rose and now reigns and see others as “Christs” among us, people for whom Jesus died on the cross.

Why is this so important today? It is a vital message for us to live and proclaim (in word and in deed) because our world is besieged by false and deceptive narratives. We are called to relate to other people, not in the light of the colour of their skin, their gender, their race or by any other worldly measure. They must be to us as Christ is to us. If this is not the way we see them, then we have fallen into sin. It is only by viewing the world through the lens of Christ that true justice and peace will reign on earth. Nothing else will initiate it, grow it, or promote it. Nothing. Christ and Christ alone.

***if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation***

However, we are lectured in so many ways today as to what we need to be doing and thinking if we are to build a “just world”. The ABC is a master of this lecturing, as are “celebrities”, teachers, lawyers, professors at universities, anyone with a Facebook page and sadly, too many clergy and bishops. All a part of the Social Justice bandwagon.

**Produced by Bishop Michael Hough for the Disciples of Christ -**  
[anathoth.hough@gmail.com](mailto:anathoth.hough@gmail.com) - [www.houghongod.com](http://www.houghongod.com)

What these people are not ready to acknowledge and celebrate is the Lordship of God, in Christ, over the whole of the cosmos. The God who creates, saves, redeems and blesses is the only means to a whole new creation. We humans are unable to build a better world on our own. Many have tried but all have failed – Adam and Eve; Noah’s world; Babel; Babylon, Persia, the Greeks, Romans and various European nations. We have seen National Socialists, Marxists, Communists, Capitalists and lately Social Justice warriors: Black Lives Matter, LGBTQI, gender diversity, history wars, cancel culture, the raising of feelings over facts, white privilege, white guilt, etc. They have all failed and will fail because they have not built their hopes on God in Christ.

*Light has come into the world, but men and women love darkness rather than light*

We have been warned of these dangers. Jesus taught his disciples that He is the only bread that gives life, how it is the Spirit who gives life and that in our quest for the fullness of life as humans, *the flesh is of no avail*. The word *flesh* as used here by Jesus means the way we think and act as creatures. It stands in opposition to the way of the Spirit. Only one way leads to life. Only one way builds up “treasures” both in this life and in the world to come. One way with zero compromises.

The world rejects the Light because Jesus taught how He had come into the world to call all men and women to repentance. Not only were they to repent if they were to rejoice in life under the sovereign rule of God; they were to follow Christ, imitate the ways of Jesus in the world and give witness to the risen and reigning Christ through all of their words and deeds. For many, this proved to be too great an ask. They were prepared to acknowledge God, accept Christ but not make significant changes to the way they were living. They might be prepared to do this once or twice in their lives, but not as an ongoing baptismal requirement through to the time of their death. The *ways of God*, sadly for them, were not as palatable as the *ways of men*.

*We do not seem to be aware it is us in that boat, in a storm, on the lake*

Jesus used this image of being in a boat with his disciples on a number of occasions. In today’s story they are on a short trip to the far side of the Lake – a bit like our life journeys from birth to death, our faith lives from baptism to judgment. In both of those realities we will be faced inevitably with storms of every kind, stirred up by a never-ending array of causes. Some will appear to “swamp our boat”, while others will just rattle us. We face these as individuals and as parishes and faith communities.

We are also faced with the dilemma faced by the disciples in that boat. They could fight the storm, the wind, the raging seas with their own resources – they were, mostly fishermen. But that benefitted them little. Or, they could turn to Jesus who is the source of life and salvation, who does not want us to flounder and fail. And that is where we are today. Making the decision to prioritize Christ **or** simply drifting away into irrelevance and death as a community of believers. As Jesus says: only by faith.

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[anathoth.hough@gmail.com](mailto:anathoth.hough@gmail.com) - [www.houghongod.com](http://www.houghongod.com)