

Bible Study Notes for WB 1st December '24

- When do you put your Christmas decorations up? Do you have a favourite?

Isaiah 52:7-10

John 1:1-5

Moderator George Watt Preached.....

'I sometimes get grumpy. One of the things that I'm grumpy about is when people put up their Christmas decorations too early and then again those who take them down too early. But do you remember Christmas 2020? The Christmas of a very dark year when we were encouraged to put our decorations up early to bring some colour and light that we so desperately needed.

I recently travelled down to Worthing. It was a very gloomy day when suddenly I saw some bright shafts of light piercing through the clouds. Before I could get my camera out an even brighter light was revealed as the clouds parted enough for us to see the sun. The sun is always there behind the clouds. We just can't always see it.

Although the initial violent onslaught of covid has abated we live in a very dark world where so many live a life that is helpless and hopeless.

- Do you remember when you were in darkness? What was it like when you first saw the light?

We, who believe in Jesus, are called to proclaim God's message. We are agents of light in this dark world. So we need to ask ourselves if we do bring light into people's darkness when we speak. If so, we are those described in the Isaiah reading who bring the good news of light, joy and peace.

Those of us who preach or lead worship on Sundays often ask ourselves if that little talk we give once a week, that worship we lead..... is any of it truly relevant to the congregation who go out into the rest of the week.

- Can you remember something that you heard in a sermon or a song that was sung during worship that made a big difference to you?

A recent survey declared that on any Sunday only 10% of people will be in church. That means 90% will not be blessed by the light of Christ and the good news of His gospel. As we go about our daily business we can shine out light into our

homes, our communities and or workplaces. We can cause little shafts of light wherever we are that can reach the 90%.

The next question we need to ask ourselves is... What is that Good News? Isaiah says it is peace. We heard recently of a welcome ceasefire in Lebanon but so many other places are in turmoil. Peace is just the beginning. What is also required is reconciliation. We have no power like politicians and negotiators to bring about peace and reconciliation but we do have power in prayer. Conflict is all around us not just in other countries. We can be peacemakers as we speak and act. We can be shafts of light.

- Take a couple of minutes now to just speak out any place or situation that needs peace and reconciliation. Just one word can be a prayer rising to God.

We must bring good tidings into dark situations. There are lots of ways news can be brought to us but the news we hear is all bad news. [I recently discovered the Good News Network that only reports the good news]. We receive, generally, an overwhelming picture from across the world of conflict and it's so easy to get sucked in and repeat it to other people we meet. 'Did you see the news last night? What about that.....' So how do we counter that? We could go out carrying a determination to share good news.

- Can you recall a recent piece of good news?

We are called to proclaim salvation. We know we have no power to save but God does. He sent Jesus who brings hope for change in our lives, our situations and our world.

As the sun breaks through the clouds it reigns over the world below, shedding light over everything in its path. So, God broke through the darkness with the light and life of Jesus so that everyone could see Him. Jesus come bringing hope, not just for today but for the future. Because He promises that He will come again. Advent is not about celebrating something that happened in the past. It is about future hope. And now we are entrusted with the message of hope and reconciliation: reconciliation to ourselves, to each other and to God. Let us be shafts of light for those in darkness. Let us be agents of peace, sharers of good news, demonstrators of Jesus, the Light of the World who came and will come.

- Read again the scripture from John1:1-5