

Isaiah 1.1, 10-20
Psalm 50:1-8, 23-24
Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-28
Luke 12:32-40

These sermon notes were prepared before the sermon was delivered and so do not transcribe the actual sermon word for word

“*The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz*”, this week we have another vision from another prophet. In the last three weeks we’ve already heard from Hosea and Amos so we should by now have some appreciation of these prophetic insights; and hopefully have had an opportunity to compare and contrast with our own ‘Divine’ insights.

From today’s reading it appears on the surface that Isaiah wasn’t big on Churches or religious practices:

“*What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?*”

“*..your appointed festivals my soul hates*”.

However we should pause and remember that Isaiah is presenting us with the Word of God; “*Hear the word of the LORD*”. And so what is really being called into question is our being here today.

Does God really “hate” the festival that we celebrate in our Eucharist today and care nothing for the sacrifices that we bring as our offering?

Isaiah’s prophetic utterance gives us an opportunity to question ourselves.

Now all of us can readily identify moments in the past where the Church has been corrupted by itself:

1. The religious genocide of the crusades.
2. The torture and killing sprees of the inquisition.
3. The Christian servicemen chalking “to the glory of God” on the bombs they loaded on to the planes that would invade Afghanistan.
4. All those incidents subject to the current Royal Commission.

However, Isaiah asks us to look at ourselves and consider the worth and the value of our practices in relation to the Divine vision of life.

Are we really alive in “the image of God” or do we also know Isaiah’s words identify that our “*hands are full of blood*”?

Isaiah’s prophetic vision is quite sobering as it calls us to take stock of ourselves, at the same time it is also inspiring and empowering.

When we hear “*the word of the LORD*” saying: “*even though you make many prayers, I will not listen*”, rather than be disheartened, we might reflect on the orientation of our prayer life.

Isaiah, like all prophets, looks beyond the surface reality and into the ‘Divine’ reality that is the very essence of creation and the essence of life.

There is a place for prayers that bounce off the surface of reality, they are icons written in words, rather than pictures and serve to call us to attend.

Are they listened to by God?

The icon, and so too our prayer, invites us beyond that which is seen, spoken, written and heard into the unseen and silent 'Word' of creation.

Here in our worship, we ritualise that reality of life that is lived 'in the Divine'; we generate a Sunday icon and we are each and all a part of the picture.

Our being here, our words, actions, songs and prayers create the icon of life that is a unified sacrament. We give and we receive, mirroring the activity of God, the divine activity of love.

We claim ourselves as 'the body of Christ' and we consume the same; losing ourselves in the wholeness of all.

Isaiah, now asks us to go beyond the being an icon, and to enter the very reality that we celebrate.

"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean"; realise your baptism and 'shine as a light in the world to the glory of God'.

"cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."

Gregory of Nyssa, one of the Cappadocian Fathers, said of Isaiah; "He was more of an Evangelist than a Prophet, because he described all of the Mysteries of the Church of Christ so vividly...."

And like Isaiah, Paul echoes the same in his letter to the Hebrews: "...*faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.... By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible*"

Paul encourages and affirms the reality of our faith, a reality that is beyond what is seen. Using the example of Abraham, Paul encourages us to go beyond where we are and to be creative of life.

Paul turns us toward "A New Creation", toward a future that truly echoes the icon of ourselves that we celebrate here today.

And we have a choice to forward into life or backwards: *"If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one."*

We might consider this verse in light of the current political landscape.....

"If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return."

The 2013 election looks back toward the 2007 election, and you have to question if any
“*desire a better country.*”

If, and only if, we can embrace our worship, our being here, as an icon of ‘Divine Life’ that
is ours to create, then we will know:

“*it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*”

The gospel recognises that fear will in many cases overcome faith. Again, in our political
landscape ‘fear’ is the dominant energy, for fear creates doubt rather than vision and so
works toward leaving things as they are...

The gospel begins with “Do not be Afraid”.. and that is where we also should begin.

Paul had a vision in Corinth..... and he too was encouraged by God’s word, as we should be
encouraged:

"Do not be afraid ... for I am with you"
[Acts 18.9]

Peace be with You