

For a time like this.            Revd. Mike Loader Assistant Priest

What has been on your mind lately? Maybe the thought ‘not another lockdown’ or ‘are we ever going to get a good result for us all in these ongoing Brexit negotiations’. Or perhaps, what this country needs, what this world needs, is a ‘good old fashioned revival’, a real outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit to give everyone real and lasting ‘Hope’.

In our weekly zoom bible studies, we were looking recently at the wonderful prayer that the prophet Daniel offered when he was in exile in Babylon with his people. It is recorded in chapter nine of his prophecy, verses 1 to 19. Please take time to read it and decide what you think.

For me it seems a prayer that is particularly relevant for our own nation some 2500 years on, perhaps nothing ever changes? My mind went back to two elderly sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith living in the Hebrides, who set themselves earnestly to pray for revival, and for many of us the answer to their prayers came during our lifetime, from 1949 to 1952. As a result of that revival, the great evangelist Duncan Campbell went to visit for two weeks, but ended up staying for two years, such was the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Those two sisters had received a promise from God that, “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground”. We need the same, or even more today, when we look around at the dirth of spiritual life and concern for our one true and living God. I was looking on the website for ‘Thy Kingdom come’ earlier today, and this quote just seemed to reinforce the need for revival at this time. The nineteenth century Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, known as ‘the prince of preachers’, said “A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or day-dawn without light”. May the joy of the Lord cause us to cry out to God for revival.

So what did Daniel pray? We need to remember that the Hebrews were exiled to Babylon, and Solomon’s Temple destroyed in 586 BC, because the people had moved away from the covenant given to Moses. God set before the people two options, (see Deuteronomy 30v15-20) ‘to follow Him and to be blessed in keeping His ordinances and commands’, or ‘to suffer the consequences if they forgot Yahweh and His commands, and went after false idols’. What do you think is the path that we as a nation have chosen to follow?

So Daniel (chapter 9), as an old man, probably over eighty years old, received a vision in the ‘first year of Darius the Mede’, that is in the year 539 BC. Daniel had been reading the prophet Jeremiah who had predicted the peoples seventy year exile if they abandoned God (Jer 25v11), and Daniel recognised that he, and his people, were now living with the consequences.

So what does he do? Something, that to my shame, I have never really practiced, not only did he pray, he fasted. We also read in verses 3 to 4, ‘That he turned to the Lord’, ‘He sought God in prayer’ and ‘He made confession’. Perhaps those three actions will also resonate with us as we cry out for our nation at this time.

Daniel saw, as throughout the Old Testament, that repentance is a constant call from God. It was John the Baptist's message, it was supremely Jesus message, and has been ever since. And why did Daniel feel that so strongly? Three times we read, (verses 10, 11, 14) 'we have not obeyed'. O that we may recognise that is true for us, as people of God and as a nation.

Ian drew our attention during this study, that there is a petition for our Prime Minister to call for a national day of prayer. Some of you may recall have effective was such a call during the second world war. In the meantime may I encourage you to get together with others who are like minded, and to pray for renewal among our churches, and for an new awakening across our nation to return to God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessings to you all, Rev Mike.