



# St Margaret's Church

Together we aim to:

Worship God, Proclaim Jesus,

Grow in the Spirit

## In Contact 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021

### Isaiah 1: 2-20 : The Problems of Sin and the way of Restoration



#### How did it come to this?

After King Solomon died his kingdom was divided and made into two kingdoms. The kingdom of Israel was made up of the ten northern tribes and the kingdom of Judah was made up from the tribes of Benjamin and Judah centred on Jerusalem. The northern kings were considered all bad and the southern kings were a mixed bunch, some good and some bad.

Some of the people of the northern kingdom had been carried away by the Assyrians, and Isaiah's message is to the remaining kingdom of Judah at Jerusalem.

#### What went wrong?

The people had followed their leaders; the bad leaders led the people away from God and towards pagan worship, the good leaders led the people back to worship God. But over the two hundred or so years since King David the people's behaviour had declined and they had become a sinful nation (v4).

This not only affected the people, it desolated the countryside. The place once described as a land flowing with milk and honey was laid waste by enemies, Jerusalem with its temple shining like a beacon of hope is described as a booth, like a garden shed in the corner of an allotment. Isaiah said: 'If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors we would have been like Sodom and Gomorrah' (v9), those ancient unrepentant cities of sin in Genesis which God destroyed. He calls on them to hear the word of the Lord and to listen to the teachings of God. The people of Jerusalem had relied upon their temple sacrifices and worship to protect them; they didn't realise that God wanted personal heartfelt worship.

#### Just Judgement

Verses 11 to 15 explain how the physical acts of turning up to worship, going through the motions, seemingly doing the right things at the right time had become an abomination to God because the people were so sinful. Worship works to promote holiness; it should never be used to hide sinfulness. God's just judgement is to reject their sacrifices, to refuse their offerings and to stop listening to their prayers.

#### Restoration

To be restored they must first become clean. In order to be clean they must repent, that is to turn back towards God. To stay right with God they should remove 'the evil of your doings': we might say 'remove the temptation' (if your temptation is chocolate, keep out of the sweet shop). To remain right with God they are to replace the negative bad things with positive good things: 'Learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow (v17)'.

Our restoration is the choice of two 'ifs' (v19-20): 'If you are willing and obedient' (v19) or 'if you refuse and rebel' (v20).

OUR choice is to be willing to confess that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him to life and to be obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this way we become the people that God calls us to be, acceptable to God and doing the good that He wants us to do in our community and country.



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## Bible Verse for 2021:

I am about to do something new; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.

Isaiah 43: 19



Daily Hope is a free phone line which offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.

### **Lockdown and how it will affect our services:**

Under Lockdown 3, places of worship are still allowed to gather so long as Covid-secure rules are adhered to. Because the government has said we can, the Church of England requires that we offer a Sunday service. We believe we have made church as safe as we possible can, but we are aware that this new strain of the Covid-19 virus is much more contagious. So we would ask you all to **carefully reconsider** attending worship in person. If you do come, remember that masks must be worn over the nose and mouth (unless you are leading from the front), hands sanitised on entering and leaving the building, no singing is allowed and 2m must be kept between you and anyone outside your household at all times. We also want to remind people that they must leave as soon as the service ends and **NO** socialising is permitted in the building. We are aware that, like schools earlier this week, the situation/rules may change before Sunday and we may no longer be allowed to hold a gathered service in church.

**If you are intending to come, it would be sensible to call the Rectory on 432 1844 on Saturday. A Facebook notification will go out to those online if we are closed.**

### **Looking Ahead:**

Next week we will continue our Bible series on Isaiah and Rev Matt Calladine will be preaching on the prophetic song of the unfruitful Vineyard in Isaiah chapter 5.

### **January 17th to 23rd Pray for:**

- ◆ People living in Brecon Avenue, Connaught Avenue, Lindsey Road & Brighton Avenue.
- ◆ Good listening & wise decisions at the PCC meeting on Monday.
- ◆ PCC on Saturday as they take time with God seeking guidance about the next Mission Action Plan for St Margaret's.
- ◆ Many throughout the city to join the Greater Manchester Prayer event on Thursday.  
**Greater Manchester Prayer Gathering @ GtrMancPrayer**
- ◆ Steph preparing to film Experience Easter & organise for schools.
- ◆ Speedy recovery for Jon & Jude Witt with Dignity after being injured by a wild pig.
- ◆ Care for new children arrived at Falconer Home, especially Moses and Gift.

### **Television & Radio this week:**

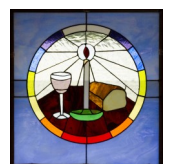
**BBC 1 - 12.25 pm: Songs of Praise.** New presenter Brenda Edwards visits an outdoor walking church in east London, and Katie Piper meets the vicar who has become a hit on social media with his 60-second sermons.

**BBC Radio 4 - 8.10am:** From All Saints Leighton Buzzard with Alexander, BBC Radio 2 Young Chorister of the Year 2020.

**BBC Radio Manchester (95.1FM) 8am to 8.30am:** Mike Shaft presents religious stories and the day's news on this local radio programme.

### **Sunday evening at 8 o'clock:**

At home pray for our church family and join them in breaking of bread.



Help is available if you need it: **Call 0800 234 6123**

**Monday to Friday: 9am to 5pm & Saturday: 10am to 2pm**