

TUESDAY COMMUNION
"Beyond human failure".

Hymn:

Reading: Isaiah 43.22 – 44.3

It's sometimes been said that the God of the Bible has broad shoulders. On the one hand he has to bear our human indifference and on the other hand accept the blame when our own actions lead to tragic consequences.

Isaiah speaks of how the people of Israel had become indifferent to God:

“You did not call upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel”

I suspect that this isn't about a failure of people to go to the Temple for worship but more about their attitude towards God.

People may be in the right place but there is both a lack of openness to God and a failure to keep the law in relation to those whose needs are greatest. (Second Isaiah generally seems uninterested in the Temple as an institution and in the sacrifice of animals. He **is** concerned with people's openness to God and the way they live together as a community!)

If people ask God, why did you let us be taken as slaves and be brought to Babylon, God has his answer. For Isaiah it was their failure to be open to God, to seek his will and to do it, and to live as a community in which all shared in the richness of life, especially the poor, that was at the heart of their collapse and overthrow.

Our 21st century society is complex and we should not be unthankful for all that is good in it. As Christians, we point to the major contribution Christians (with a significant contribution from many Methodists) has made to shaping what is good in our society over the last 200 years.

At the same time, we may also fear that our generation has become increasingly indifferent to God:

- we don't feel he is to be thanked for the blessing we enjoy,
- we do not seek to know him and his will for us;
- we do not feel the need to repent or to say sorry for what has been wrong in our own lives or the life of our society.

We are indifferent to God and in many ways we aren't happy! We seek in many places for that which will give us peace and we fail find it.

But Isaiah's message isn't primarily about where we've gone wrong but is one of hope. He tells his generation that God has not forgotten his people.

“Thus says the Lord who made you, who formed you in the womb and will help you:

Do not fear, O Jacob, my servant.”

If sin, our human tendency to fall short of the mark is part of the reality of our lives, and even great reality is the love of God for his people. Isaiah trusted in a God who would act to save those who were slaves in Babylon and he spoke of how these freed slaves would bring a world to faith and a new way of living together.

It was probably a descendant of one of these freed slaves, a child formed in the womb of Mary who was uniquely open to God. In his life and by his death he revealed still more than Isaiah has seen about the way God wanted his sons and daughters to live together.

Remarkably, this child fulfilled the role given by Isaiah to “The “Servant”. As a servant of God he gave his whole life for the people he loved and became a rich source of blessing for both Jews and gentile. He opened a new way by which women and men could share in the life of God, trust him, love him, and serve him.

As we share in our communion today we recognise this truth about ourselves:

We have all failed God and each other.

Sometimes we have done so deliberately, often through our ignorance and blindness.

But Jesus meets us in this sacrament as the one who ministers to us God's grace, his unconditional love toward all people.

In this sacrament he challenges and helps us create the kind of communities that God wants for all his daughters and sons and especially those whose need is greatest.

So, Joy and Peace be yours as we celebrate the coming of the one who shares in our life and brings us God's peace.

Amen