

20 October 2024 Isaiah 53:53-end the suffering servant and Mark 10:35-45 James and John want glory

What weather we've had! Clouds, rain, and then for a change, rain and clouds. Then once in a while the sun breaks through, a shaft of sunshine through the lowering clouds reminds us of the beautiful brightness and warmth of the sun.

Perhaps the prophecies which pepper the Old Testament came like shafts of sunshine to our prophets. Micah saw that the king would be born in Bethlehem, Zechariah observed that he would come riding on a donkey, and that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, the psalmist knew that he would be worshipped, brought splendid gifts, and would be the perfect sacrifice. Between them they built up a picture, disjointed perhaps, of Jesus' life, from his birth in Bethlehem to his death, and his character, powerful and just, kind and caring.

Isaiah tells us: a voice will cry in the wilderness.

Isaiah 7 verse 14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9 verse 2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

A king will be born. He will rule the world fairly and he will care for everyone. Everybody will be saved and will worship him. Let's just hear a few more of these predictions, doesn't this sound like Christmas?

Isaiah 9:6-7 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

This was what everyone in those beleaguered lands was waiting for! A new king for them, sent by God to deliver them from the Roman regime, and rule fairly, with power and justice. How do you think they pictured this new Godly King? Riding a charger or in a carriage? Bedecked with gold and finery? Looking imperial, of course.

However, if you read the whole chapter, this is not a happy ever after story. Immanuel will suffer at the hands of people, he will be wounded, he will remain silent when accused, he will die to redeem the debt we owe because of our sins. Like a lamb to the slaughter. And so, God the father will make his own sacrifice in order to forgive us.

An uncomfortable bit of scripture? It doesn't make sense for a king like *this* to suffer like *that*, after all. Surely anyone can recognise a king when they see one? Priests and scribes, fishermen and tax collectors, who expected a King to be a mere carpenter by trade? I do wonder if Nicodemus realised and couldn't bring himself to declare what his heart told him.

Going back to James and John. No doubt they felt that they had finally understood what Jesus was about, how he was going to rule the world, how everyone who believed in him (not difficult if you were there with him and saw him do the miracles and heard him speak!) so why not ask to be close to him? Yes, they can follow him, they declare, yet, when Jesus looks you in the eye

and asks you to join him, whatever the trip is going to be like, you don't say no, do you? The others are unhappy: is this extra privilege the brothers are asking for? Jesus goes on to explain how to get to glory. Serving. Not as a grand king in a chariot, but a humble modest servant, working towards his father's kingdom. Have you ever had that feeling, listening to something complicated, that a mist comes down and you just can't grasp the point? Do they get it? Not sure.

James and John thought they knew, but suffering was to come for James too. It wasn't until Cleopas and his friend were on the way to Emmaus that the mist lifted. *This* was what Jesus was saying!

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"?

As small but dearly loved members of God's family, we cannot possibly comprehend his plan. But, like James and John, we can step forward and say we're in. we must follow our hearts and serve where we can. Then, worship, pray, give thanks, and wait with open eyes and hearts for his next move.

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