**Psalm 1**

**Reflection – Wednesday 18th November 2020. Zephaniah 1:7-18**

Last week we heard how the prophet Amos was sent to the Northern Kingdom to warn of impending exile if the Israelites didn’t mend their ways. This week we see Zephaniah prophesying to the Southern Kingdom of Judah that they won’t escape the same fate if they too don’t mend their ways! Like the Northern Kingdom, Judah seemed to think that nothing bad would befall them, even though the Assyrians were ‘knocking on the door’ and King Hezekiah had, in the past, already appeased the Assyrian King, Sennacherib, with much wealth [2 Kings 18:13-16]

Zephaniah was the great, great grandson of Hezekiah and third cousin once removed from King Josiah. Josiah’s father and grandfather had not followed King Hezekiah in his devotion to the Lord, but had reverted to the evil ways of other ancestors. Josiah was only 8 when he became king, but perhaps it was his cousin Zephaniah’s prophecy which prompted him, at the age of 26, to pay to have the Temple repaired, which resulted in ‘The Book of the Law’ being rediscovered and Josiah’s reforms to begin. [2 Kings 22 and 23]

Zephaniah was in despair because his people seemed to have grown further and further away from God [Zephaniah 1:4-6]. As Jesus so clearly put it [Matthew 6:24] “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other”

Zephaniah’ warnings seem even more extreme than Amos’s but again, were only reflecting the warnings God had given Moses [Deuteronomy 28]. And yet, later in his book [Zephaniah 3:12,17], he reminded the people that God could relent, as he promised in 2 Chronicles 7:14:

‘If my people, who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face

and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.’

Has our society become ‘double minded’ – paying lip service to God whilst following every whim of society? Do we, today, need to wonder whether we have allowed those two thieves of greed and arrogance to steal and kill and destroy God’s creation, rather than choosing to follow His will and so enabling all creation to share in that fullness of life God intends us to have? Are we in danger of not heeding the warning of climate change, has greed led to the devastation of the rainforests and arrogance and carelessness led to the poisoning of this beautiful world with pollution, not to mention selfish ambition?

As I was preparing this reflection I came across a link to a video someone had sent me earlier in the pandemic, which I think is so relevant right now: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw5KQMXDiM4>

But what can we do, faced with such seemingly overwhelming issues? I am reminded of the story of the boy with loaves and fishes [John 6:9]. He was willing to give up his lunch – no small sacrifice for a hungry youngster – but his small offering was used by Jesus to feed thousands! God has never wanted empty, grand gestures [Isaiah 1:13] but he does want us each to do what we can.

Prayer

* Let us ask God to show us what we can do to make a difference, and let us be sensitive to the promptings of God’s Holy Spirit.
* Let us pray for all in power, that they may use that power wisely
* Let us pray for forgiveness and an end to the pandemic
* Let us give thanks for all those involved in developing a vaccine.
* Let us pray for all those in despair right now, and for ways we can show them God’s love.

**Collect**

Heavenly Lord,

you long for the world’s salvation:

stir us from apathy,

restrain us from excess

and revive in us new hope

that all creation will one day be healed

in Jesus Christ our Lord.  Amen.