

Going Deeper with the Sermon

Kevin Isaiah 58 part 1

Our world is Broken...

Alan Redpath ... We live in a broken world. In every direction there are breaches which are wide and deep. There are broken hearts and broken homes, and that which once was sacred is but a waste place.

This brokenness is most obvious when you stop and think about how we care for the children of the world. We live in a world where ...

640 mil children are without adequate shelter

400 mil children are without access to safe water

121 mil children have no access to education

1.5 mil children are orphaned every year as a result of HIV/AIDS

And we live in a world where child slavery still exists ...

In India young children are enslaved making rugs for export across the world. In Cambodia and Thailand young girls are trafficked into prostitution. In Cote d'Ivoire, the world's largest supplier of cocoa, children are enslaved on cocoa farms so we can enjoy cheap chocolate.

This is what the people in Isaiah's day had forgotten. They were doing religion but they had neglected to care for broken people.

They were praying and fasting and from the outside it looked right. But look at how God describes them in ... v 1-2

Their prayer and fasting were not wrong. The problem was ... 5-7

James says a similar thing in the NT ... 1:26-27

The point of this is that sometimes we forget what is actually important to God. We get caught up in what we think is the right thing when in actual fact God hates what we are doing. He has not called us to be focused on growing a church culture that becomes preoccupied with reproducing itself. God is not interested in us maintaining the trappings of religion; regardless of whether it is Catholic, Anglican or Baptist.

God is in the business of restoration. He is concerned for people and has called us to be the means through which His care is poured out.

We see this reflected in the plan of salvation God enacted. It is a plan where-by He would restore all things. It is the fulfilment of this plan that is being celebrated by the angels at the birth of Jesus.

Luke 2:14 ... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace (shalom) to men on whom his favour rests. The angels declared that the Shalom of God has come. His salvation is now.

Shalom is more than peace ... it includes prosperity, welfare, well being, wholeness, harmony. In the NT the Greek word for salvation carries this same broad idea. Salvation encompasses notions of healing, preservation, making whole,

keeping safe and restoration. This is good news for the whole earth, for all peoples. This is good news which impacts the physical as well as the spiritual.

John Stott commenting on the ministry of Jesus wrote ... "What aroused his compassion was always human need, in whatever form he encountered it. And out of compassion for people in need he acted. He preached the gospel, he taught the people, he fed the hungry, he cleansed the leper, he healed the sick, and he raised the dead. All this was part of his mission."

Throughout the history of the church this idea that the good news of God means caring for people has impacted the followers of Jesus ...

1515 ... Luther preached salvation by faith through Christ alone and fought for the education of poor children and low interest loans for workers.

1790's ... William Carey proclaimed the gospel throughout India, translated the Scriptures as well as founding a savings bank, fought for the conservation of forests; and openly resisted the cultural tradition of widow burning.

Early 1800's ... William Wilberforce ... as a committed evangelical worked for the abolition of slavery and also helped found the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

1823 ... Adam Clarke ... "How can any nation pretend to fast or worship God at all, or dare to profess that they believe in the existence of such a Being, while they carry on the slave trade, and traffic in the souls, blood, and bodies of men! O ye most flagitious of knaves, and worst of hypocrites, cast off at once the mask of your religion; and deepen not your endless perdition by professing the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, while ye continue in this traffic!"

And what about us?

If you were to ask me about my vision for the future of Ashgrove my head and heart goes to portions of Scripture like Is 58 ... 11-12

When people throughout the community speak of Ashgrove I want them to think of a place of refreshment, a place where broken lives are repaired and restored. For me such a picture reflects the heart of God for the earth.

Such a vision has implications for all of us, for what we do in our local community and throughout the world. One thing we can do today is get involved with the ministry of BWA.

Questions for reflection

1. Reflect upon the brokenness of the world? What thoughts/emotions does it provoke within you?
2. When you think of Jesus' mission what words come to your mind?
3. Is there anything from this sermon that is particularly challenging you?
4. Where is God calling you to act in terms of being a part of His restoration plan?