

CALM & BRIGHT SERIES – ‘WHAT SHOULD WE DO’ – ADVENT 3

Read Luke 3: 7-18 John the Baptist does not mince his words; his preaching is clear and direct; repent. “What should we do? What are we doing wrong?” the crowds cry out. His reply remains completely relevant for us today. To paraphrase, “not until you have truly repented will you produce good fruit, and you will be judged by the fruit you produce.”

What do you understand the following to mean (v9) ‘the axe is already at the root of the trees?’

Check your answers against Ezekiel 33: 11 and John 3: 17-18 and 2 Peter 3: 9. God takes no pleasure in condemning anyone at Judgement

Day, which is why Jesus’ Great Commission (Matt 28:19) given to his followers is so important. *I was once challenged to argue, for or against, ‘that there is nothing, absolutely nothing, more important to tell someone than the Gospel of Jesus Christ’. Would you argue for or against?*



The question of what counts as ‘good fruit’ has been, and continues to be, misunderstood. It is likely that the necessary explanation and connection offered in Ephesians 2: 4-10 has failed to be made. Certainly, secular society appears to expect God (if there is one) to take account of good works (should there be a judgement day). But good works without faith in Jesus and giving the glory to God are not ‘good fruit’ even though they may be very worthy acts. Salvation cannot be earned. *Do you think this a just judgement by a just God?* Do the following passages help your deliberations? - 1Peter 4: 10-11, Romans 1: 18-21, James 2: 14-24 and Psalm 149: 4.

Interestingly (v7-10), the crowds listening to John seem to accept that their lives had not produced good fruit, although the majority appear to be Israelite (claim Abraham as their father) but still recognised their need of repentance. The examples of good fruit John uses could be summarised as compassion, honesty and integrity, but the important point is that these flow from the act of repentance. It is the truly repented heart that changes everything. The good fruits are produced by the heart humbled before God, which ignites faith in God, changes attitudes, and recognises the need to follow Jesus. *How different are the good fruits from the Fruits of the Spirit?* (see Galatians 5: 22-23).

Read Psalm 62 This Psalm reinforces our theme but addresses it from a different perspective – that of the peace and rest discovered in the surety of salvation found in God alone. *Do you recognise this peace and rest? On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being highest, how important is this peace and rest to you?*

Prayer *Father, through John the Baptist you tried to prepare your people for the coming of Jesus. Please prepare our hearts and minds too. Amen.*