

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

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## DARK CLOUDS

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22ND SEPTEMBER 2021

The other day, I was at home preparing some things for church, a bit of sermon here, a catch-up coffee, diary appointments and such like - trying to use the best of my time to organise things well, so that I could navigate my way through the busy week. Before Melanie left for work, she had told me that washing was out on the line in the garden - drying in the morning sunshine. The forecast was for heavy showers at some point, so Melanie asked me to keep an eye out on the sky and watch for the incoming rain, so that I could rescue the washing and bring it in, so that the work that had been carried out to clean the laundry, wouldn't be ruined by the downpour.

The day started well enough. I had my head in the computer and an eye on the phone, making a few calls and writing down thoughts and notes as they came to me, all the while looking out towards the horizon to track the incoming black clouds that were starting to gather in the distance. The sun was still out, the rain was a way off, so I ploughed on with my work.

I occasionally looked up to check on the progress of the massing black clouds, but they didn't appear any closer than before and the sun was still breaking through the cloud cover over me, so I decided to wait longer and make the most of the drying sun whilst I had it.

I was aware a short time later of the wind starting to be heard, but a cursory glance confirmed that the sun was still out and I kept my head down working. Then the house phone rang...

Now occasionally I get a call from Steve Potts in Romania and I love spending time catching up and finding out what is happening with my friends' miles away. This was one of those occasions, and I suppose you can fill in the rest of the story.

As I chatted with Steve, my attention had gone completely from the approaching black thunderclouds. The wind had risen and the clouds were moving in faster than before.

I hadn't been on the phone long when Steve asked me the question he always asks: 'what's the weather like in England at the moment?' He likes to ask this question because 9 times out of ten it is sunny and hot where he is, and rainy and miserable where I am!

'Its 35C here and too hot!' says Steve

'It's OK here at the moment quite warm in the sun, but it is threatening to rain in a bit" I said. Seconds later I could hear the sound of rain bouncing off the conservatory roof. "oh, it's just started to rain now, so the forecast was right'. Steve laughed as he was still in glorious sunshine and we began to reminisce about the time I had visited Romania in the scorching summer one year and I was tasked with cutting down and logging trees out in the mountains - it was hot work and I had often fell asleep when I could find some shade!

The sound of the rain pelting on the roof, suddenly brought me to a start, as I realised the washing was still out and I was now in trouble! I had failed to keep an eye out and now the wash would need to be done again....

At least it was something that could be rescued, so no real harm done, just the embarrassment of having to explain to Melanie that I had failed in my one task of helpfulness. I had failed to heed the warning of the clouds and now the nearly dry laundry was as wet as it had ever been.

Some things are not quite as repairable or retrievable however, and it really important that we maintain our focus on the correct things in life in order to make sure that we are not missing out - but even this has to be put into the right context.

As a Christian, I am aware of the dimension, that the life I live now, is only a precursor to a life to come.

Where I spend that life after this one is down to the choices I make now.

Jesus makes an observation to the crowds in one of the events captured in Luke's Gospel account of Jesus' life.

In Luke chapter 12, Jesus has been warning the people about being ready in this life for the return of Jesus in Glory which will herald in the judgement of the earth and everyone who has lived in it.

In verse 54 Jesus tells the crowd:

"When you see clouds beginning to form in the west, you say, 'Here comes a shower.' And you are right. When the south wind blows, you say, 'Today will be a scorcher.' And it is. You fools! You know how to interpret the weather signs of the earth and sky, but you don't know how to interpret the present times.

I knew that the black clouds in the distance were telling me that rain was approaching, but I decided that I had time to take appropriate action, I could make the most of the available sunshine before the rains came down. I made a calculated decision to wait a bit longer, but I hadn't counted on the phone call from Steve. I was diverted in my mind and the rest is a soggy story of having to redo the washing. However, the warning Jesus is giving is not one that we can correct if we miss what the signs are telling us. The bible declares that everything in this world, points to God and the existence of a creator

Psalms 19 is perhaps the greatest of these:

- 1 The heavens proclaim the glory of God. The skies display his craftsmanship.
- 2 Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known.
- 3 They speak without a sound or word; their voice is never heard.

4 Yet their message has gone throughout the earth, and their words to all the world.

God goes everything to bring his creation back to himself. He even sent Jesus to die on our behalf, paying the price demanded to make us 'good in his sight' or what the bible calls 'righteous', God knew we could not make ourselves good, so he provides the greatest rescue act in history.

In Luke's gospel, chapter 12 that we were looking at earlier, Jesus tells the people the story of a rich man with a good farm which produces lots of crops, so much so, that his barns are full and he has no more room for the harvest. His answer to this predicament is to tear down the barns and make bigger ones. He did this in order to provide for himself for years to come, so that he could eat drink and be merry, with little concern for anything else around him.

verse 20 brings the story into sharp focus:

But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?' "Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

And there it is:

Without relationship with God, everything else is meaningless. We can live a good and fruitful life now, but if we do not have an eye on eternity, what good is it. I dried the washing whilst the sun was out, but I should have heeded the warning of the approaching storm. The signs were there - I chose to chance it.

Many people satisfy themselves by convincing themselves that death is just the end and therefore it is this life that matters now. But, creation itself speaks of God. Jesus was sent to earth to die for our sins and then rose from the tomb to conquer death. This tells us, that death is not the end and that God loves his creation so much, that He was prepared to let His only son take on the sins of the world - for me and you! The pain and sorrow we see in the world, the fruitless attempts of man to put power in his own hands and the demands of man to control his own destiny are only signs that the clouds are on the horizon.

Jesus' return is a solid truth that scripture warns us to be ready for. Don't get misdirected or diverted.

The truth is obvious to see - if only we would pay attention before it is too late.



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