



**SERMONS**

by

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**Bible reading: Isaiah 55: 1-9 and 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

**Title: *"Looking to the past via scriptures to inform the present"***

I recently observed some interesting information about the state of this country:

- There has been a gradual decline in Christianity in the UK over the past few years due to cultural shifts.
- 50.7 percent of people in the UK identify as Christian.
- Only 34% of people have trust in the church, while the rest have very little or not much trust.

It is against this backdrop that I introduce the theme for this morning's sermon: 'Looking to the Past via Scriptures to Inform the Present', with the aim of examining the effect of sin and rebellion on our church.

Let me draw your attention to a famous quote by Mahatma Gandhi:

*"I like your Christ, but I don't like your Christians. They are so unlike your Christ."*

This uncomfortable statement by Gandhi is one we ought to pause and reflect on at once. I dare say many of the people who claim to be Christians are not actually Christians in the manner contemplated by Christ. It's a superficial, health-club type of Christianity. Perhaps we should consider redefining our Christianity?

Throughout history, the Bible has warned us against complacency by alluding to numerous examples of contention between good and evil. From the battle between Lucifer and the angels in heaven, to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, to Abraham's contention with God about Sodom and Gomorrah, and of course, the rebellion under the leadership of Moses, which the prophet Isaiah references in our Bible readings (Isaiah 55: 1-9) – at a time when the Israelites had been consumed by sin and material things.

There was a pernicious agenda to ensure that Moses and Aaron did not reach the Promised Land, no matter what. When you read the scriptures, you'll notice key figures, Jannes and Jambres, two chief magicians/sorcerers, who withstood Moses and Aaron and left Egypt with the Israelites. They later helped turn the people against Moses when he went up the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights – promoting rebellion through the worship of idols in the form of a golden calf that Aaron made.

They promised the people that things would be better under Pharaoh's kingship. You'll also notice that Korah and Dathan used their position to gather together two hundred and fifty leaders of the congregation, representatives to usurp Moses and Aaron.

The Bible says the Lord struck the people with a plague and consumed 250 people because of rebellion and sin. But God was gracious in saving the offspring of Jannes and Jambres. So, the Bible shows that throughout history, there has been a constant battle between good and evil in the fight for Christianity.

How does this relate to us? And I dare say, things are no different now. I dare say that as a church, we have become barren of all that is truly good, and the consequences are obvious to see. There's been a gradual separation of the state from religious institutions. The freedom of gospel witness is under threat now more than ever. There is darkness in the country – darkness and uncertainty in parliament, darkness in communities, darkness among the rich and the poor. Darkness among our kids – many are losing their lives to heinous gun and knife crimes at a precious age.

And what's worse is that the church is sound asleep and clueless. The truth is we don't have the solution, and neither do our MPs. We can't even attract young people to our churches despite our vast resources. In an age where education is so important, we don't have enough Methodist schools that will instill our Christian values into our young people. Our young people are sound asleep, and we don't really bother to wake them up. They're not interested in our Methodist heritage/DNA. They're not interested in playing a significant role in our leadership structure. The question is: what are we really teaching them? What are we feeding them? Why are they so disinterested? Why do they not have any faith in our leadership? Do they really feel included in our decision making? Do they really feel inspired to serve or valued? Are we enabling them to flourish? We must interrogate our church.

I dare say that people are happier to attend breakfast clubs and slim-fast clubs rather than attend church on a normal Sunday. We worship like saints on Sundays, only to worship idols on a different day. We engage in pernicious behaviour and think nobody notices. Status has become our obsession. We have become comfortable with a form of Christianity that makes us feel good without doing what's required to make us good. What's ironic is our behaviour during Lent. We want the whole world to know what we're giving up. It is almost as though we have turned into angels overnight.

Sexual immorality, gambling, and drunkenness are rampant, and no one is thought the worse off for indulging in them. Now, when such is the state of things in churches and chapels, it is no surprise that the church is dying. It is no surprise that Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13 to remind and advise us to learn from our past:

*“These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So, if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.”*

So, what can we take away from this?

1) Firstly, brothers and sisters, I believe that God is assuring us that in the midst of all that's happening around us, we can be assured that darkness cannot overcome the light of Christ. I'm submitting to us that we need to lay down our lives in service to the Word of God and the kingdom of Christ in all aspects of life.

2) I'm submitting to us that as a Church, we need to pursue a new scriptural direction, pray for new vigour, and find a new clarity, a new basis for thought and action rooted in the Lordship of Christ. I look forward to the day when our young people can testify to having a heart-warming experience. I

look forward to the day when God will raise up new leaders that will put scriptural holiness at the forefront of their message. I look forward to the day when our churches will be filled with young people. I look forward to the day when our young people don't have to leave our churches to go elsewhere to be fed. I look to the day when we will seek the face of the Lord for revival.

3) We will face trials and tribulations which will ultimately strengthen our faith and character, but let us hold firm to the belief that our temptations are not unique or beyond our strength; it is part of our calling as evidenced by the experiences of Israel in the wilderness. He's done it before, and he will do it again. **Amen!**