

Hinde Street Methodist Church
Sunday 1st December 2019 10.00am

LORD, are you unmoved by all this?

An Advent meditation based on Isaiah 64

Rev. Peter Cornick

LORD, are you unmoved by all this?

The Temple, the place of worship
lovingly built up over the years
David, Solomon,
The place to experience you –
reach out and almost touch you Lord;
so close – yet mysterious;
concealed; sacred.

A beautiful place.
The place our ancestors worshipped;
A place for heaven and earth to meet.
A place of solitude for me, Isaiah,
But what pain; what suffering:

***Jerusalem is a deserted ruin,
and our Temple, the sacred and beautiful place
where our ancestors praised you,
has been destroyed by fire.***

LORD, are you unmoved by all this?

Or are you angry,
Holding our sins against us?

To what might we compare the sins of Israel?

Autumn leaves.
As the sun tracks south,
The days shorten.
The chill bites.
And the leaves, so rich in energy during spring,
So broad and green during summer,
Brown at the edges,
Harden and curl;
It is possible to feel in the decaying leaf,

Its exposed, fragile, skeleton,
Dying; death,
The inevitable destiny of each living thing.

The leaf clings to the branch,
Hoping that time will not notice.
How we cling – hoping no one will notice,
Pretending God will not notice.

***All of us have been sinful;
even our best actions are filthy through and through.
Because of our sins we are like leaves
that wither and are blown away by the wind.***

Oh yes, I know,
'not so harsh Isaiah'
you say
my best actions are not so bad.

But has your prayer been one sided,
Sort me out first Lord,
Never mind the child
whose parents have died of disease,
Or the child
who was in the wrong place at the wrong time
in a battle of nations and faiths.
Sort me out first Lord.

Perhaps you have forgotten to turn to the Lord for help?
You've tried a political solution
Listened to the advice of generals,
Looked for the perfect gift in the market,
Thrown money at chance.

When will you be still,
And know that it is only God who can help you?

No one turns to you in prayer; no one goes to you for help.

Like an autumn leaf,
You can hold on no longer.
You fall and are blown away by the wind.

You have abandoned us, Lord.
You have hidden yourself from us.

LORD, are you unmoved by all this?

Imagine for a moment,
You are not a leaf at all,

But a portion of clay,
Stuff of the ground,
Pliable,
Flexible,
Able to be shaped into something beautiful.

But as clay,
You yourself cannot construct this beauty.
A potter takes the rough hewn clay
and creates the jug for water,
creates the bowl
to receive the water
and wash the hands, the feet,

the heart.

Who is the potter?
Who could come down and refashion
the rough places into the smooth?

***But you are our father, LORD.
We are like clay, and you are like the potter.
You created us,
so do not be too angry with us
or hold our sins against us forever.
We are your people; be merciful to us.***

***LORD, are you unmoved by all this?
Are you going to do nothing and make us suffer more than we can endure?***

Isaiah the prophet sees –
Sees – not the future,
That is for a charlatan in the bazaar,
No, I see the way God has been,
The way God is,
And conclude how God will act in the future.

If we have fallen like autumn leaves,
So too did our ancestors,
Abraham and his seed.

You Lord, showed mercy and compassion.
You Lord, re-made your covenant.

You give food to the hungry,
And send the rich empty away.
You help your servant Israel,
And have promised the same to your faithful people
For generation after generation.

With imperfect clay,
You fashioned jugs to fill bowls
To offer you service.

I, the prophet Isaiah,
see your advent amongst us.
In the desert places, hope,
A plain where once there were mountains and valleys.

A light to lighten all peoples,
A saviour
To bring peace to the shadow of death.

I see you, Lord,
Coming down to meet us,
Being like us,
One with us,
Born of us.

What am I saying?
Your presence in the Temple was destroyed,
And now needs to be rebuilt.
What would happen if you were born,
one of us,
A human?
You would probably be destroyed too,
Through your constant love and mercy,
And that really would be too much to bear.

LORD, are you unmoved by all this?

Or will you gather up the fallen leaves,
And arrange their pastoral colours
Into a rainbow of concern?

Mould the passive clay
To your design?

***Why don't you tear the sky open and come down?
The mountains would see you and shake with fear.***

Come, Immanuel,
come and cheer
Our spirits
by your advent here!

***No one has ever seen or heard of a God like you,
who does such deeds
for those who put their hope in him.***