**Happy New Year?** dkm Jan 2022

Two and a half years ago I booked an overseas holiday. Six months before we were to leave international travel was thrown into chaos by a viral pandemic. Even here at home people panicked, clearing supermarket shelves of toilet paper and other products. Still, I thought, it would all be over by the time we planned to leave on our holiday. But as that time approached we realised we would have to postpone our trip till the next year. That year came and we have now rebooked our trip for this year, 2022. Surely after two and a half years things will be back to normal, I thought, but now I am not so sure.

The lives of millions around the world have been thrown into turmoil by this virus. People who felt they were in control of their lives are now in despair. Before the pandemic only cancer made people feel they had lost control of their lives. With this virus we have lost control of what we wear, where we go, how we work, and indeed how we worship. But by the grace of God we have been able to continue worshipping God. In doing so, we remember that our God is sovereign in all things and that he is the one in control of our lives. God is shaking the world that men and women might return to him, that they might repent of their sin and believe in Jesus.

God shook Jerusalem so hard in 587BC that he destroyed it and sent the sinful people into exile. After seventy years, Daniel confessed the sins of the nation, before praying, ‘Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause your face to shine on your sanctuary, which is desolate’ (Dan 9:17).

Do we not need to repent and turn to the Lord as he shakes our nation today? We pray that today’s shaking will not go on for seventy years, but we do not know! What we do know is that the Lord is powerful to stop this pandemic, so let us pray to him as Daniel prayed all those years ago. Let repentance and return to the Lord start with you and me, and let it start today, because now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

Thousands thought they had more days to live, until they succumbed to coronavirus. Any of us may be cut off at any moment. Dear friend, this is the reality and this is the urgency with which we proclaim the gospel. Thousands are living like the rich man in Luke 16, doing nothing wrong except living for themselves. But living for yourself and ignoring God is the essence of sin. You cannot save yourself so you will die in your sin just like that rich man, unless you repent and believe in Jesus Christ. Some people hear the gospel and say they will consider the claims of Christ at a later time. Most of these people die in their sin. Today is the day of salvation; tomorrow may be too late!

*‘For I know the thoughts I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope’ (Jer 29:11). This widely quoted verse goes on, ‘Then you will call upon me and go and pray to me and I will listen to you, and you will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart’.*