

**Saint Peter's
Easter Carols
Sunday 17th April 7pm
The Law and the Gospel**

Early on in my time here at St Peter's, I was asked by one of you, 'Vicar, what is a good life?'

It's a good question.

And my topic for this evening.

In the Old Testament, the Creator God, the God of Israel, elected a people, and set them apart, from every other nation, to bring the light of God's justice, God's commandments, God's righteous will, by which all people may live in peace, even to the ends of the earth.

In the Old Testament, the people of God failed God's mission, to be a light to the nations, a witness, to the one God, and his righteous will, of justice, and therefore peace, for all the nations of the earth.

Called to be obedient, to God's commandments, and therefore to God, the people of God had fallen into sin. The sin of the human creature, desiring to be God. That, in setting aside God's commandments, sets aside God. That, in setting aside God, sets aside the righteous will of God, for justice and peace in the world. Leading to God's judgment of the people, in the form of their exile in Babylon. For the sin of their apostasy against God. The turning away from his commandments. That is the turning away from God.

In the New Testament, the Creator God, the God of Israel, has elected a new people, the Christian people of God, and set them apart, from among all the nations of the world. In a world of sin, of disobedience against God, against his commandments, by a life in this world, of humble obedience to God, by a life lived in obedience to his commandments, the new, Christian people of God, is called to bring the light of God's justice, God's commandments, God's righteous

will, by which all people may live in peace, to the very ends of the earth.

So that, in a life of humble obedience to God, and to his commandments, the worldwide Christian community, represents a new humanity, in the life of the world.

A new humanity, of humble obedience to God, to God's justice, leading to God's peace, that is a foretaste of a new humanity, of universal justice, and peace, in the future of the kingdom of God, at Christ's return.

A new humanity that already now, is an anticipation, and a promise, of the kingdom of God to come.

Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it.

We see this in the West today.

Born of Christianity. Born, in the freedom of God's justice, in peace and concord, with God, and with our fellow man.

We soon fell, into disobedience. We made ourselves independent of God, and his commandments. We made an idol of our own, merely human nature.

Leading to God's judgment, such as we see, over the West today, in the dark clouds of socialism. Now threatening the future of the West.

We don't know where it is leading. What we do know, is this: that anyone who has an interest in the future of our modern western secular society, has an interest in the return of our society, back to its roots in Christianity, from whence it came.

'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near; repent, and believe,' Jesus proclaimed. It is our proclamation, too, today.

‘For the thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. But I have come that you may have life, and have it abundantly’, Jesus said.

Jesus, in his sermon on the mount, warned His Church, of the consequences of its own failure of its mission, in the light of the failure of God’s mission, with God’s people, in the ancient world:

‘You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

Before affirming the Christian mission to the world.

‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven’.

‘Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished’.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God.

In him, God is fulfilling his mission in the world.

And he is doing it now, not only through the Jewish people of God, but through the universal, Christian, people of God, throughout the world. A city on a hill. The light of the world. The salt of the earth.

Jesus’ crucifixion liberated the world.

And it did so, in two ways.

First, Jesus' death liberated us from sin.

By this he reconciled us to God.

Second, Jesus' death liberated us from the law.

The ten commandments are binding on the state. For what is the state, but the law. The state is subject to God, and his commandments.

But the Christian is no longer under the law, but under grace. No longer under human beings, but under God.

The state and its laws are there, for the unity of human life, to curb evil, and to point beyond itself to the future of humanity itself in the kingdom of God.

But according to the apostle, because in Jesus Christ that future is here, because in Jesus Christ that future has now dawned, we who are in Christ are no longer under the state. Our life is now hidden, in Jesus Christ. Who is seated, already now, at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. The kingdom of Jesus Christ, is above, the sceptred sway of the kingdoms of this world. As high as the heavens are above the earth.

As new human beings, our lives are now hidden in Christ. Our lives are now empowered, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, of course, that we are left alone in matters of moral conduct. We receive apostolic petition. By which we learn what it means to be a new creation, a human being, in Jesus Christ. What it means to live a common life, a common lifestyle, here, in the church. By the power of the Holy Spirit. A lifestyle that is not opposed to God's law. A lifestyle, whose only authority, is Christ himself.

Free at last.

Free at last.

Alleluia, free at last!