

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

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4TH JUNE 2021

If you like reading and are familiar with the Russian classics the name of today's Beacon might make you think about Fyodor Dostoyevsky and his famous book called Crime and Punishment. The main character in the book is a mentally deranged young man who lives in Saint Petersburg at the beginning of the 19th century. It's not an easy read nor a happy one but it's interesting. Some of the themes explored in the book are religion, poverty and nihilism as the writer was also a philosopher.

Growing up, my favourite pastime activity was reading. This was inspired by my mum who owned an extensive collection of books. She loved reading and she passed on the love for books to my sister and me. Summer holidays were mostly spent reading the French and the Russian classics sprinkled with a few Romanian writers. This predates the Internet and Netflix.

You might wonder how does the Russian novel Link to today's beacon. In one of his beacons last week -The one in which he was talking about revenge -Jamie mentioned something about Punishment fitting the crime and this made me think of this book because -spoiler alert -The main character gets a punishment which fitted his crime. That's all I'm gonna say not wanting to spoil the whole book for those of you who would like to read it.

When someone makes a mistake or commits a crime we find ourselves often saying "he /she got what they deserved". When I watch the news and I listen to reports of people being convicted for crimes they have committed I find myself being glad that they were punished-That they got what they deserved. We don't like it when we see rules being disregarded by some people. If we allow our kids to do whatever they want without disciplining them, then we notice that they do not learn the difference between right and wrong. And

when they persist in the wrongdoing-This could be said of grownups and not only children- It's even worse. Without the punishment there will be nothing to make them do the right thing.

When someone is at their first offence in a tribunal or court of law The punishment is not as harsh. It is considered that if the law shows a little kindness the offender might be discouraged to persist offending.

Furthermore when someone makes a genuine mistake and they show that they are sorry, that they did not meant to do it, we are more likely willing to forgive. I believe this goes for the justice system as well as in private matters.

What does the Bible say about crime and punishment? The Jewish law when it was given it stated clearly that an eye should be taking for an eye and a hand for a hand. If someone stole something they should pay it back with interest and so on. If you want to read about what punishment fits what crime, you can find it in the book of Leviticus .

What about us, who are not Jews, what shall we do ?

The Apostle Paul address this question in the letter he wrote to the church in Rome. In this book he talks a lot about sin, law and what should people that are not from a Jewish background do.

First of all : "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

Romans 3:23

Sin is what separates us from God; it encompasses all the things we have done wrong and is the state that we find ourselves in before we realise that we need a saviour, repent and trust Jesus to forgive us.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23

This verse tells us what would happen to us without Jesus and that we don't need to do anything for our salvation, it is gifted to us by Jesus.It's all done for us .

After that :

Romans 6:14 says

"For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace"

Grace is the undeserved gift that Jesus bestowed on us when he died on the cross.

Again, we don't need to do anything For our salvation, it is gifted to us by Jesus. And the next verse tells us how it works :

"And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" .Ephesians 2:8-9

Consider this word "grace". When the only punishment fit for my sin was death ,God gave me grace. Romans 5:8 tells us :

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Would you be able to give your life for your enemies? ...I know I wouldn't. The kind of love the Lord has for us, it's hard to understand and match against our human standards, nevertheless this is what we have been called to : to love people and show them Jesus in the way we live .

Let me close with Romans 5:6 and encourage you to be just in your dealings with others but above all show mercy because :

"Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful."



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