

Coach House Church BEACONS

UNDER PRESSURE

25TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Before electricity was lighting the streets, the nights were dark . If you were brave enough to venture out after dark, you needed a beacon- a lamp to light your way to ensure you didn't end up in a ditch.

During Nero's reign in Rome, on more than one occasion, this darkness was broken by massive torches in the amphitheatres where the entertainment was taking place . If you would had gone closer to one of these torches you would had seen that there were people burning on them.

Many of you know the stories about the christians persecuted by the roman emperor Nero and how in his madness he burned down Rome and blamed it on them. On the Christians . This started a cruel wave of persecution throughout the Roman Empire.

About this the Roman Tacitus, according to the translation of J. Gysius, says: "Then, Nero, in order to avert this report from himself, caused those, called Christians by the common people, to be accused and exceedingly tormented. The author of this name is Christ, who was publicly put to death under the reign of Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate, the governor. Those who confessed that they were Christians, were first apprehended, and afterwards ..were all condemned, not so much on account of the conflagration, as of the hatred in which they were held by mankind. The taking of their lives was accompanied with much mockery; they were covered with skins of wild beasts, and then torn to pieces by dogs; or nailed on crosses; or placed at stakes and burned; serving also as torches for the spectators, when the day was over."

This is a bit much for our modern and super-humane ears. Still, cruel things happen in our days as well; people still get beaten and imprisoned for having the wrong belief or the wrong colour. However, this is not what I want to talk about in this beacon.

What I do want to talk about is what those Christians did when they were burned and tortured just because they put their faith in Jesus.

One thing I can tell you that they did not do was to hate. They did not hate the ones who killed them. And this is because they were looking at Jesus and the way he acted when he was on the cross. Some records say that they were singing..

Persecution in our modern country is not quite at the same level but events and temptations that tests our faith still come along in our path. And the way we deal with these situations says a lot about our faith and our values. This is what Peter in his first letter writes about these difficulties :

"In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

1 Peter 1:6-7

In dealing with the Covid 19 consequences, when some industries have been reduced to absolute silence and the work market is becoming more and more competitive, are we prepared to put others first, share our next pay cheque with the someone that has stopped getting one ?

In our minor upsets and set backs, do we repay tit-for tat? Do we take our frustrations out on our family members, fiends or co-workers or do we run to take it to the Lord in prayer ?

Life is tough at the moment and it might get worse before it gets better. The way we act under fire gives away what type of people we are.

1 Peter in chapter 3 from verse 8 says this :

"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."

1 Peter 3:8-9

Brothers and sisters, let's take a minute and search our hearts; in our troubles let's not forget that we are Christ witnesses. We are witnesses to the truth so let that truth shine through your life. Allow yourself to be changed by the truth of the Lord. Don't be afraid of tomorrow and never forget the Lord if for us.

Lord Jesus, help us in our troubles to always look to you first and help us to be true witnesses of your great love and compassion.

Lord we bring our wounded world to you and we pray for healing. We pray for our leaders; Give them wisdom and discernment in this crisis. And we pray for each of our brothers and sisters that are suffering and are affected by virus and its consequences we pray Lord for healing and blessing.

Thank you Lord for your plans for us are always good . Help us Lord not to forget that you are always good.

In Jesus name

Amen



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