

## 290 “be no more children, tossed to and fro”

As “strangers and pilgrims” bearing the name of Christ, we are passing steadily through this life towards heaven where, by God’s grace, we now truly belong (eg., I Peter 2.11 / Hebrews 13.13-14 / Philippians 3.20). Along the way we have responsibilities to fulfil and sins to avoid, so that our lives may be simple visual-aids faithfully proclaiming the Lordship of Christ.

For the world needs the Good News of Jesus Christ as much as it has ever done, all the more so because of the pace, noise and turmoil of modern life. A brief round-up of recent news events, great and small and in no particular order, makes the point: Brexit chaos; the wonderful cave rescue in Thailand; fighting in Syria, Yemen and in parts of Africa; huge rainstorms and mudslides in Japan; Federer out of Wimbledon; boatloads of desperate people trying to get into Europe; England out of the World Cup; the ongoing construction of “mega mosques” in European and North American cities; Donald Trump’s visit to Europe; Hamas fire-kites causing widespread fires in southern Israel; the Novichok nerve-agent poisoning in Amesbury; the North Korea situation; and the threat of trade wars.

The fact that such a list takes just a couple of minutes to compile raises some rather important truths! First, the prevalence of “24-hour news” means we can easily suffer from “information over-kill”, being constantly bombarded with news items from all over the world. The media people are obliged to do this to justify their existence, to out-do their rivals, and to find something – at times, anything - to fill up all the air time they have at their disposal. Second, we see how quickly the attention of the world’s media moves on, taking our attention along too, making it difficult for us to remember what is genuinely important and what is less so. And third, every news provider is biassed! - this being ultimately unavoidable, whatever may be the claims of impartiality; (those fire-kites over Israel are a good example of this, these being hardly reported in the West because of the strong pro-Palestinian bias in the western media). We are thus obliged to be ever-cautious over what we are being told, or are not being told.

So our pilgrimage is indeed through a world of noise and turmoil, and what a comfort it is to turn to God’s Word for reassurance and guidance. We read in Ephesians 4 of how those in Christ are slowly growing towards, in that lovely wording in the KJV, “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (4.13b). The nearer we come to that state, the more we shall gradually become “no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight (literal, the trickery) of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ...” (4.14).

In our Greek Lexicon we learn that the Greek word translated in verse 14 as “children” (naypios) is quite specific, implying very young infants, just toddlers, who by implication are untaught and unskilled. Now that is a picture of the likes of us whenever our attention is deflected away from the Lord Jesus Christ and towards the ways of the world and of the media today. The Holy Spirit continues through Paul, “But speaking the truth in love, may (we) grow up into Him (Christ) in all things ...” (4.15), emphasising the need for change and growth into maturity as we tread the path of pilgrimage.

It is timely to mention briefly that of course Christians are not the only ones who see themselves as pilgrims. We are living in an age in which “progressive” and “liberal” values are being promoted on all sides, in a great trendy march to a human-produced “heaven on earth”, but which is turning out to be something very different. In response we remember, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1.7).

Islam is also on the march, especially in the West, with its aim of building a worldwide caliphate under “Allah”, (one of the pre-Islamic Arab names of the moon god). In the Koran Jesus is revered as a prophet who has been superseded by Mohammed, and His divinity, crucifixion and resurrection are rejected. In response we remember John 14.6, Acts 4.12, Romans 3.21-28, I Timothy 2.3-6 and the like: “Jesus Christ is Lord” is the key biblical statement of truth, which is based upon incontrovertible evidence from history and experience.

As Christian pilgrims we remain focussed and alert, upholding God’s truth in Christ against falsehood whenever this is necessary – which is becoming increasingly often these days. We are not Christian pilgrims because it happens to suit us, but because the Christian Faith is TRUE.

Thanks be to God, we have every reason to go on with a spring in our step and a song in our hearts!

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