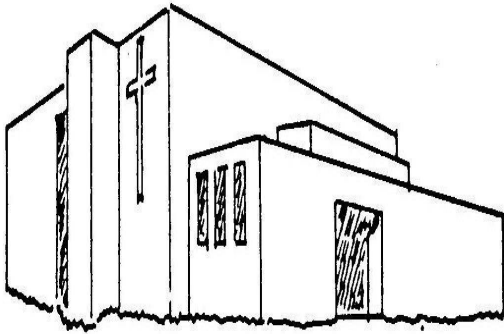


Barnsley Baptist Church



Sunday September 1st 2019

Theme: First in series on Hebrews

Preacher: Pastor Ken Jefferson

Introduction

Let me tell you a little story, Have you ever heard of Charles Hadden Spurgeon? If you are a baptist then you must have done, because he was arguably the greatest of all Baptist preachers, whose ministry at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London became legendary. His sermons are still reproduced to this day, and books of devotional thoughts extracted from them, sell in their thousands.

There was a time when he, as a young man, was listening to a less than inspiring series of discourses on the letter to the Hebrews and he said of them, that they made a very undesirable impression on him.. In fact he came to a point when he said he wished the Hebrews had kept this letter to themselves because he, a poor Gentile lad was sadly bored by it.'

I hope you will not come to the same conclusion. I know the mature Spurgeon changed His mind because, he saw that in this letter there is the most thrilling teaching about Jesus, that any Christian could wish to know. We will approach this letter making it a voyage of discovery, and if we do so we will not be disappointed, or bored in any way. So without any hesitation let's get into it.

We will do so by way of a question? **Who wrote this letter?** Short answer. Three words needed. 'We don't know!'

What is it's main message? Four words needed.'Hold fast to Christ.'

Last week I was speaking to someone who served many years in the British Army and eh was stationed for some time at Catterick, here in Yorkshire. After we had parted company I remembered that there was, and maybe still is a picture in that camp. It ways done by a war artist, showing a young engineer facing the force of enemy shelling as he tries to repair communication lines that have been severed during battle. He has crawled through ditches and under barbed wire, and in the process he is fatally wounded, but with his last action he reaches out and reconnects the broken wireless lines and cries out, "Through!" He has given everything to re-establish the connection that was broken.

This is the message of Hebrews.Jesus our brother, who is Jesus our King, who is Jesus or High Priest and Mediator, has given everything

to make sure that we can be, and are, through His sacrifice, reconnected to God, and to faith in Him, in Jesus the same yesterday, today and for ever there is an absolute need to hold fast.

What is the challenge of the letter? It is this? Jesus never changes, but the world is always changing. How then do we hold fast to Him in a dynamically changing world.This is a massive challenge for us as faith comes under ever increasing pressure.

So let us see how the letter begins. What is the first statement? In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.' I don't think we need to dwell on this too much. We are simply being told God has always been a communicating God. He has always been there and He has never been silent even when men have thought him to be so, never been slow, never reluctant to make His will known. God has always been speaking words of life, wonderful words., powerful words of promise and blessing, words of healing and hope, words of grace and words of warning and judgment. **God has always been more ready to speak than men have been willing to listen,** and to get his message across he used great servants, the prophets. He gave them what is known as the prophetic burden, the burden of hearing and bearing the Word of the Lord, men who spoke with His authority. He sent them on to the stage of history, reluctant revolutionaries, called to challenge and to change the life of the nation.

But now, after all His other words, words that were vital but unfinished, words that were varied and incomplete, words that were always pointing beyond themselves, God has spoke a new word, a complete word, His ultimate and Final Word and he has done this by speaking in a language we can all understand the compelling language of human personality, He has spoke to us in His Son.

This is a massively important statement. In fact. this single statement by the Writer. brings the whole meaning of the New Testament to us God who has spoken to men on earth, has now spoken directly from heaven, sending us His son from there, to be with us and for us, to become one of us and one with us. **A completely new era has begun,** God has give us the Word made flesh. In the coming of Jesus, a new age has broken in on us, The time of incompleteness is over, the time of unfulfilled longing is over, the time of reaching for the meaning of life is over. The waiting is done with because the Word has been sent, has appeared. The king of the longed for kingdom has arrived. His rule, His order are present, the future has arrived in the present. God has spoken to us by His Son.

And what do we know about God's Son. The Writer has six things to tell us.

1. He is the Heir of all things.

A few months before Nelson Mandela died he was asked on one occasion if he knew who would succeed him as President. He said in reply. "I have no heir!" What did he mean? He

meant that at the time, the matter of who should be the next president, was undecided.

The President may have found himself in such a situation, but in the infinitely higher councils of heaven there never was any indecision. Everything that does exist, that will exist, finds its true meaning and is ultimately under the control of the Lord Jesus Christ. This world and all worlds belong to Him. Suns and universes, planets and people, the world in all its ways is His, and His alone. The Father who created all things through. Christ has an appointed heir, and the heir is His Son, His one and Only Son. Jesus said, 'All authority in heaven and in earth is mine.'

I remember before I went to live overseas it became obvious that it should do something that was outstanding at the time. I should make a will and I did so. Can you see the picture now? A burdened Scot climbs the winding stone steps up to a lawyers office, and the pain becomes progressively more acute, because he has to say across a table, 'In the event of— I give, I leave and every Scrooge like sentiment is rising. To the surface and has to be overcome!!!!!!

Seriously the Writer tells us that God has committed all His purpose and all His plans to His Son, His sole heir, who has no rival and who has no equal.

2 His Son, Is the Agent of Creation

I know as you know that we are constantly learning more truths about the created order of which we are an infinitesimal part. I know as you know that this very day telescopes of

unbelievable sized and proportion are trained on plants and galaxies about which we are only just becoming aware. The dizzying extensions in size, shape and content of space we cannot really take on board, and it might all be very frightening in one way, but in another it can be extremely exciting, because of the truth that every star and every planet has been fashioned by an Omnipotent hand. Whatever the shape and the substance that might yet appear in space or out of space, even in spaces beyond space, the truth that Scripture declare seriously and in no sense simplistically, is the truth that is given us, that it was all created through God's Son.

This is exactly what the apostle John also has to say.' "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.' The apostle Paul says 'By him all things were created; things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by Him and for Him. He is before all things and in him all things hold together.'

These are mind blowing truths. They expand our thinking. They stretch us because they claim literally everything in heaven and on earth for Jesus. They say simply and profoundly He is Lord of all. It belongs to Him by right. He is the Agent and author of creation. It was formed and fashioned for Him and through Him.

In so many ways creation has been and is marred, is scarred, is broken and hurting, is doing damage to itself by the day and hour. There is so much that could cause us to question as to whether there is any reason or purpose to it. It could seem a matter of random actions and interactions, but for we who are people of faith the Writer of this letter re-inforces the fact that the whole world is in His hands! We see the complexity of it all, the juxtaposition of beauty and violence, of life and death, and still we confess, this is our Father's world created through Christ and for Christ, who is Lord over all. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

3. Jesus who is God's heir, the agent of Creation, is also the personification of God's glory.

That is to say He is the radiance, the shining out, the reflection, the perfect mirror, the exact representation of God's glory.

Into the church I pastored in my home town there came a man and his wife, who settled quickly into the congregation. The man had newly retired and I initially learned that he had been doing some consultancy work in the financial world. Only later, when we knew each other better, did he confide that he had in fact been working for British Intelligence and his work was dealing with any attempt to counterfeit the currency of the British realm in different countries of the world. Where there were schemes often running into many millions

of pounds, schemes attempting to launder money, it could sometimes be counterfeit money, and his work was tracking this down and working with law enforcement to deal with those perpetrating this illegal action. The counterfeit money had to be tested against the real standard.

If we were to check out Jesus, as against what we might call the God standard, there would only be perfection. There would be no discrepancy, no distortion, no defect, no disappointment. He is the exact stamp, the perfect likeness the exact representation of God the radiance of His glory.

Remember the Writer in this letter is addressing mainly Jewish believers and they knew so much about the glory of God. They knew how the glory of God had descended at Mount Sinai and at the Tent of Meeting. They knew that when the Ark of the Lord, the symbol of His presence was captured it was as if the glory of the Lord had departed. God was to His people 'Awesome in his glory.' Isaiah knew what it was to be caught up into the glory of God as he entered the temple. He knew the whole earth was full of God's glory.'

Now says, the Writer to the Hebrews the glory of God has been made known, shown fully and truly, not in a place but in a person. It has been revealed in Jesus.

The apostle Paul said, "For God who said let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the

knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the perfect revelation and representation of God. He is the image of the invisible God.

4, He is the Sustainer of all things.

One of the most essential lessons to be learnt when any person or any agency gets involved in compassionate ministry of any kind is the lesson of sustainability. It is not too difficult to see a need, and to be deeply moved and to feel compelled to do something about it.

When for example Bramwell Booth was driving in a carriage with his father General Booth, they were travelling through the district of Blackfriars in London. Through the window of the carriage William Booth saw so many huddled figures lying along the streets and he asked his son what the people were doing there, and his son said, "Father they live there!" "Well" said General Booth, "Do something about it." And something was done. This proved to be the beginning of a huge network of social services addressing the need of the poor. In the goodness of God the work was started and was sustained and endures in different forms to this day.

But sustainability is not easy. Many care programmers flounder and fail because they run out of resources.

The Writer of this letter tells us something wonderful about Jesus. He is not only the Creator of all things He sustains all things. He holds things together that would otherwise crash or collapse. He sustains order where there would otherwise be chaos. Life does not endure because it has inherent force, direction, movement or purpose for its own. It endures because there is Someone who sustains it who holds all things together.

Let me ask you a question. **How big is your vision of Jesus?** My guess should be that each one of us could do with expanding our picture of Him. We need to see Him as He truly is—limitless in power and authority.

There is a hymn I like very much because for me it strikes the real note, underlying all that Scripture has to tell us about the position and power of Jesus.

Name of all majesty, Fathomless Mystery
King of the Ages By angels adored.
Power and authority Splendour and dignity
Bow to His majesty Jesus is Lord,

The last verse says.

Source of all sovereignty Light, immortality,
Life everlasting And heaven assured.

So with the ransomed we Praise Him eternally,
Christ in His majesty Jesus is Lord!

This is the Christ who sustains all things. And in these difficult days through which we are living, when some politicians want to have the

people in their pockets, isn't it worth having the confidence to say, the Lord has us in his Hand. He rules in the world above us.

But if he rules in the world above us He is concerned for the world within us and we need to be absolutely sure that we see what He has done for us.

5. Jesus Secures our salvation

If Jesus, is, as indeed He is, constantly work in creation, we also need to know that this same Jesus has secured our redemption. He has done at one time a work that endures for all time. He has made purification for our sins. He has done what we cannot do. He has made us clean, and done so by offering up His life as a single and sufficient sacrifice for our sins. He has taken all our impurities upon Himself and cleansed us from all unrighteousness in His crucifixion.

I remember going to minister in a new town and taking a jacket to be dry cleaned to a company for the first time. When I got it back it had more creases than when it went in, and even more annoying was that the marks that were there before I took it to them were not removed at all. Their whole process was ineffective, and I took the jacket away without paying anything.

The cleansing of our hearts is a work thoroughly done by Jesus. It is a process that has to be repeated not from His side but from ours because we do sin and we do need to be cleansed and can be cleansed because of his sacrifice that is sufficient to cleanse all our sins. If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to

forgive us our sins and to cleans us from all unrighteousness

6. Jesus is enthroned in glory for Ever.

Just hear this. Jesus is unique in God's purpose and in His person. His Jesus is unique in His power. Jesus is Unique in His passion and Jesus is unique in His position. He is enthroned in glory for ever.

Just look where God has placed Him. After He had made purification for our sins, He sat down at the right hand of God. He is in the place of honour. Where is Jesus today we ask? He is ascended into glory. He sits at the Father's right hand, from where He will come again to judge the living and the dead

Where are we today? We feel as if we are living in some kind of political mad house. We see people bidding for power, trying to cling on to power, trying to use power for their own ends. Lots of people feel things are out of control. But as Christians we know that above and beyond all these battles for control there is one ultimate source of control and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is living, who is reigning and who is above all powers, above all kings, above all nature and all created things, above all wisdom and all the powers of man, for He was there before the world began. Above all above all thrones, above all wonders the world has ever known above all wealth and treasures of the earth. There's no way to measure what He's worth. Hallelujah! Hallelujah and hallelujah again!