

Speaking to the soul



Help the oppressed

“Come now, let’s settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool.” Isaiah 1:18

If you want to know what God is like when he’s in a rage, read through this first chapter of Isaiah. He was fuming. He simply couldn’t believe that anyone could treat him like this. After all he had done for his people, it was as though they

now didn't even recognise his existence. God pointed out that even an ox and a donkey know who their owner is, but Israel didn't seem to have a clue who their master was. The country was lying in ruins and beautiful Jerusalem had been abandoned. The situation was disastrous, and yet, amazingly, the people continued with their religious practices. However, God was repelled by their worship because he knew that it didn't come from their heart. He asked them to stop making their sacrifices and offering their meaningless gifts and assured them that when they prayed, he would refuse to listen.

We spend so much of our time thinking of God's love, generosity and kindness that it's hard to think of him being so cross. It would've been understandable if the chapter had concluded by saying it was game over and God wanted nothing more to do with them, but it doesn't. Instead, God invited them to sort things out, which would affect every aspect of their lives. They certainly needed to confess their sins and turn away from them, but they also needed to: "Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows" (Isaiah 1:17).

This passage in Isaiah is a good challenge for all of us. God does love our worship and praise, but only when it is offered by people whose whole lives are committed to living for him 24/7. God will be looking at the way in which we care for the poor and marginalised in our communities in order to work out the reality of our worship.

QUESTION

In what ways do you reach out to the needy members of your own community?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you that you don't give up on me when I fail you. Help me to be the person you want me to be throughout the whole week. Amen

Photograph - Glenarm

