

Bad News and Good News

We often hear these two expressions in the reverse order in a jocular manner but on this occasion I must begin with the bad news.

We hear this almost every day. Throughout the world we hear of disasters – earthquakes and violent storms – on our media channels and newspapers. Not only are there natural disasters but also we often hear of atrocities – road accidents, air crashes, the ongoing tensions in the Middle East and many more such happenings even in our own land – reminding us of the troubled times some four decades ago.

This would lead us all to ask, 'Is there any good news or any end in sight?'

The word of God is the good news. The word Gospel that occurs many times in the New Testament means Good News. However in order to understand and appreciate this Good News it must of necessity reveal first and foremost the BAD NEWS.

As early as the third chapter of Genesis – the first book of the Bible – we are told of how our first parents rebelled against God and so sin entered the world and a great flood tide of evil which has prevailed ever since. This means that every human being born into the world is a sinner and separated from God. We do not need to learn how to steal, to envy or covet – these are all within us from birth.

In previous articles I have often referred to the 39 articles of religion contained in the Book of Common Prayer. On this matter I quote part of number 9 – “man is far gone from original righteousness and is of his own nature inclined to evil”.

In the next book – Exodus – we have the Ten Commandments which God has given as a code of conduct for our lives. Some have broken all of these commandments but all have broken some at one time or another – and the grim penalty for that is eternal death.

Moving on to the New Testament, there are several warnings of God's wrath and forthcoming judgement culminating in a detailed account in the book of Revelation (Rev. 20 verses 11-15).

This is bad news indeed. I hope it gives all of us, myself included, a measure of concern especially for our fellow civil servants who are still on the 'broad way'.

But now the GOOD NEWS. To begin with, the Good News is that, in spite of our rebellion, God still loves us to the extent that He himself took the initiative to provide forgiveness and salvation for us and a means to save us from His judgement.

Instead of condemning us to an eternal Hell He provided a substitute to take our place.

The substitute would first of all need to be a man otherwise it would not be a just one. Secondly he would need to be a sinless man otherwise he would need to die for his own sins. Thirdly he would need to possess the nature of infinity in order to take upon himself the sins of every man and woman in every time and generation. Fourthly he must be willing of himself to undergo the intense suffering involved in

order to secure our deliverance. The only person able to satisfy all these requirements was His only begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus thus died in our place. St Paul in his first epistle to the church at Corinth puts it all in a nutshell. He writes "Christ died for our sins – He was buried – He rose again" (1 Cor. 15 verses 3-4). His resurrection showed that His whole redeeming work was done and finished – and this and nothing else gave God a basis on which to forgive and save us: by transferring our sins onto Jesus and crediting us with His righteousness.

Salvation from sin and its eternal consequences does not require any effort from us – Jesus did all the work for us. "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2 verse 8) and not by any attempt on our own part – because "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64 verse 6). Archbishop Wm. Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury during World War 2, expressed it like this: "the only thing we can contribute to our salvation is the sin from which we need to be saved".

Well, there is the good news. Let us all now encourage our colleagues to repent and believe it – for it is no benefit to them unless they do.

We are now approaching the time of year when we celebrate the good news of Jesus coming into the world as our Saviour and as a humble babe – but let it never be forgotten that some day – perhaps very soon – He is coming a second time to judge the earth and usher in His kingdom. Are you at this moment in a state of readiness for this momentous occasion? Have you repented of your sins and do you believe His Holy Gospel? If you do, that is more good news – you are on your way to eternal bliss.

When the media news bulletins are frightening and distressing you can switch off – but you cannot treat the Lord's good news in that way. Instead you must respond to the loving call of Jesus, receive Him as your Saviour and enjoy the peace and joy that He provides for all who trust in Him.