



St Mary the Virgin Baldock



"Building with Christ"

Rector's Blog – day 55

Dear Friends

Isaiah 44: 6 - 8

*6Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
I am the first and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.
7Who is like me? Let them proclaim it,
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.
8Do not fear, or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.*

Is there one line of this that stands out for you more than any other? If so, which one?

For me it is the twice repeated announcement that God is the only god. Besides him there is no other. If you saw the nauseating pictures of Donald Trump outside the 'presidents' church, St John's Washington the other night, bible in hand, protestors hygienically cleaned out of the way it was not difficult to see who President Trump thinks is god. He is, and God is there to do his bidding. '*besides me there is no god.*', applies to him and not to God. Of course it is easy to mock the all too transparent posturing of other people and harder to bring words of scripture home when it is we who should be challenged by them.

The Jews had just spent the last 70 years in exile, as slaves in Babylon. If you think 11 weeks is intolerable, think of 70 years! According to the way the bible reads history, they had been exiled because they had started thinking of themselves in the same way as President Trump appears to think. They were god and God was there to make their lives comfortable. After all they were the God's chosen people. As their lives became increasingly self-centred they took their eye off the ball and were not fit and ready when Nebuchadnezzar attacked, being too busy with the early iron age equivalent of second cars, foreign holidays and designer bathrooms.

They then spent 70 years agonising over the eternal question, 'How can God let this happen if he is a God of love?', before Isaiah began prophesying hope. Maybe it took them that long to accept that God was god and their was no other, certainly not them. They had learned their lesson and got their view of God, creation and themselves in a more wholesome balance and they were ready to look to the future with hope. But venturing into the unknown is frightening so Isaiah reassures them with *Do not fear, or be afraid;* and you get the impression that the deal is that as long as they keep thi more wholesome balance in their lives , they need not be afraid. And the result was that a new more enlightened King Cyrus of Persia conquered the Babylonians and let the slaves return to Jerusalem.

What happened next? Was it happy ever after? Tune in tomorrow to find out!

So depending which verse stuck out for you might dictate what you take away from this passage. It might be a challenge to avoid a nasty case of Trumpitis and remember there is only one God, and he's not you. It might be to remember that if you are feeling anxious or afraid about the future, then as long as your priorities are wholesome you have the biblical assurance that all will be well. It might be something else entirely. Allow the inspiration of scripture to get beneath your skin through the power of God's Spirit and see where it leads.

Here is a prayer about reading the bible, the Collect for the Last Sunday after Trinity

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them



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“Building with Christ”

that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Craig Aitchison is not an artist I know very much about except that he had a fondness for Bedlington terriers who often appear in his paintings. This one entitled Calvary (1998) is in Liverpool Cathedral. For me the dog is a reminder of the importance of keeping this right balance I have been talking about today. I've never seen the actual painting. If you have, please let me know.



If you would like to join us for Evening prayer today (Thursday) it is at 4.30pm

Topic: Zoom Evening Prayer on Thursday

Time: Jun 4, 2020 04:30 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86481992472?pwd=QWJGVng0NINQMWhpNzR2OVJucDNwQT09>

Meeting ID: 864 8199 2472

Password: 938304

The times for Evening Prayer for the rest of the week are

Friday 5.00pm

Saturday 5.00pm

Sunday Morning Worship and 9.30am, Messy Zoom at 11am and Evening Prayer at 6.00pm (Details of how to join are in the pewsheet coming out on Saturday)

Every blessing

Andrew