



# St Mary the Virgin Baldock



*“Building with Christ”*

## Rector's Blog – day 56

Dear Friends

I ended yesterday by asking what happened after the Jews returned to Jerusalem after their 70 year exile in Babylon. Had they learned their lesson? Had they managed to get their view of God, creation and themselves into a more wholesome balance?

There's three short quotes today. One full of enthusiasm about new beginnings about their immediate return, one about what happened next which is as much as you would expect and one rather shocking one which shows all too clearly the danger of getting the balance wrong.

### **The first is Isaiah 52: 9**

*Break forth together into singing,  
you ruins of Jerusalem;  
for the LORD has comforted his people,  
he has redeemed Jerusalem.*

You can hear the joy of the prophet Isaiah echoing the delight and hope of the people. Clearly God is God, as they survey the ruins of their beloved city. They have everything to look forward to and work to do!

### **But just a few years later the prophet Haggai writes in chapter 1: verses 2 - 4**

*Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house. 3Then the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying: 4Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?*

And it appears that the Jews, having gained their freedom and their beloved city, lost no time building their own houses, in some luxury, but had not yet bothered to rebuild the temple, the Lord's house. It did not take long for more materialistic self-centred values to creep in, despite the best intentions to begin with. You can imagine that there was unlikely to have been much supporting of the poorest in the land as they reasserted their assumed rights and jockeyed for position. It was each man (and I mean man) for himself.

Finally, and even more shockingly, read what happened a few years later again when they went to the other extreme and got so religious that they lost the tolerance and love which is a test of a faith lived well.

### **This is from Ezra chapter 10, verse 2 and 3**

*2Shecaniah son of Jehiel, of the descendants of Elam, addressed Ezra, saying, 'We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. 3So now let us make a covenant with our God to send away all these wives and their children*

And the chapter goes on detailing how they did exactly that. It's not surprising that God's eventual and eternal response was to share life with us in vulnerability and degradation rather than try to conquer us with force and purity. That would have been fighting like with like.

What might all this say to us today? First, it is a sad fact of life that it is often when life is tougher that more extreme views and actions come out. I'm not sure it was a co-incidence that George Floyd was murdered when America was grappling with the effects of the Corona virus. Our response to this might be to be on the alert. To be more ready to trump Trumpisms with a firm but peaceful determination not to fall into the same trap and end up living like chapter 10 of the Book of Ezra

Second, I hear a lot about how people want life to be different once we get back to being able to live it once again. That's the hope of Isaiah 52 for you. Some people want to hang on to the more balanced lives they have been leading over the past weeks and the benefits this has brought. However once the hurly burly of life starts up again, and the demands begin to increase it is extraordinary how quickly we forget these idealistic hopes.. You only have to look at the amount of traffic which is already on the roads to see this happening. The only people who can allow you and I to live more balanced lives, is us ourselves. So the only people we have to blame if (when?) it doesn't happen is ourselves. So if you want your story to be Isaiah 52 rather than Haggai 1, it is worth thinking now, and making a commitment now about what you are going to do to keep your life more in balance in 12 months time.



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## *“Building with Christ”*

**This is the prayer from the Methodist Covenant service (held in January each year)**

I am no longer my own but yours.  
Put me to what you will,  
rank me with whom you will;  
put me to doing,  
put me to suffering;  
let me be employed for you,  
or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you,  
or brought low for you;  
let me be full,  
let me be empty,  
let me have all things,  
let me have nothing:  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things  
to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.'

And here is the hymn Praise to the Lord the Almighty, a great hymn to sing whilst you are deciding what balance you want to have

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rCnQNwQG5GI>

**If you would like to join us for Evening prayer today (Friday) it is at 5.00pm** The link will be on the website.

If you would like to join us for Evening prayer tomorrow (**Saturday**) it is at 5.00pm

The link is

### **Evening Prayer on Saturday**

Time: Jun 6, 2020 05:00 PM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88050014607?pwd=ZGJ2cGVVVS9oQWlobDF4N051STdOZz09>

Meeting ID: 880 5001 4607

Password: 783350

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

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

Every blessing

Andrew