

## Sunday Thought

13th November 2022 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Readings

Isaiah 65: 17 - 25

Canticle Isaiah 12: 1 - 6

2 Thessalonians 3: 6 - 13

Luke 21: 5 - 19



### A Great Future Vision

I'm afraid circumstances prevent me from being a regular *Big Issue* reader but I am glad I was able to chat with the sales person in town and buy my copy last week. I think it likely that Isaiah would be ahead of me in the queue to get this copy and read in it a letter to government urging a vision of *Big Futures* which go beyond emergency 'fixes' for our current national crises. It suggests replacing them with long-term measures to deal with the poverty cycle. The prophet's words in today's scripture tell how God takes the long-term vision much further – *a new earth and a new heaven!* There's a new picture on the screen - joy without tears; everyone's basic needs supplied; sickness and care for all the elderly; homes for everyone plus personal, productive gardens; successful employment figures; nil crime returns and all in a peaceful, prosperous society! That's some vision and it's a promise from God! However, there are conditions. It's a good thing to read the whole Isaiah chapter and especially the verse [16] preceding this passage. *'The land will be blessed by our Faithful God – the broken-hearted Father who puts past troubles and failures out of his sight and mind.* It is a wonderful vision, but not just a picture on a screen. However hard it may seem, it has to be believed and lived. That's the message of the other scriptures for today.



The gospel words tell how some of Jesus' disciples were sight-seeing in the Temple. The whole structure had undergone a period of reconstruction and refurbishment beginning in Herod the Great's time, forty-six years before. Even at this time finishing touches were still being carried out. The Temple Courts which Jesus and his disciples frequented and where the Lord held many teaching sessions with his followers, were now twice their original size. There was a lot to see, including the ubiquitous collection boxes! Jesus dashed their moment of wonder however, when he told them the building was not indestructible. They realised he was talking about 'End Times' and wanted to know 'when?' He told them the Kingdom Vision is not about glorious architecture. The Temple will not last for ever. He would know that in forty years it would be a pile of rubble again – destroyed by Rome! The Kingdom of God reaches into the world through human hearts – believer's lives. When? He is not concerned with exact dates but with being ready.

There will be signs. It will be preceded by war, revolution, earthquakes, famines and plagues, but their living through these things will be opportunity to tell *the good news* and prepare for the Kingdom. His word is the same still, *Your task is to be ready; to hold on to the Kingdom Vision, Believe it as God's word. Trust Him and Live the Vision!*

Living the Kingdom Vision is vital to its success. Paul's words to the church in Thessalonica make that clear as he sorts out more contentious issues among them. The passage for today is headed *'The Obligation to Work'*. It has been used as a basis for the *Christian work ethic*, beloved by some politicians who turn it into the unkind motto. *'No work. No eats!'* I would prefer to call the verses, *'The witness of honest working practice and untiring good works for others in greater need.'* Fortunately, Christian history is littered with the testimony of people who have furthered the Kingdom by 'living the vision' in this way. The Quaker industrialists in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries are just one example.

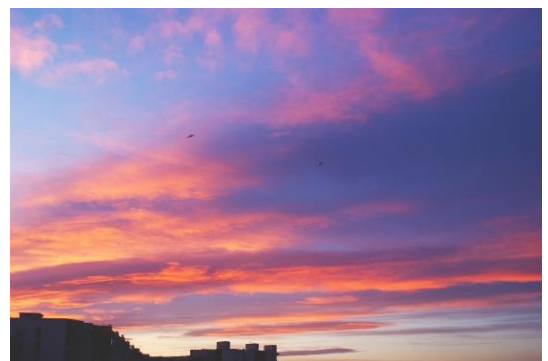
John the Baptist and Jesus both saw their ministry in terms of fulfilling Isaiah's Kingdom vision. John, baptising many people in preparation for Jesus, preached *'repent - that is 'turn your life around to put God at the centre - and 'live the vision.'* *Do the things which prove your God-centred life and your Kingdom building vision.* His message was very pointed, [Luke 3.8] *'Share your clothing and your food with the poor. Tax Collectors, be honest about your commission! Soldiers! and Police! Don't make false accusations or take bribes, and be content with your pay .....*

Now, his words are for us and all believers. *Catch the Vision of God's Kingdom! Believe the vision! Live the vision!* It's the Good News of Changed Society through Christ-changed people!

**A prayer of Visionary Hope** [based on a Song of the prophet Isaiah 12 : 1 - 6]

Our Saviour God.  
We are facing difficult, uncertain times in our nation  
and in the wider world.  
We long for better days.  
We look toward new horizons of dawning hope  
as your Kingdom comes,  
even while storms of trouble continually rumble around us.

I thank you for your promise, through Jesus,  
and confirmed by your Holy Spirit  
That you will be my help and comfort  
as I trust, work, and wait to see your great Kingdom come.  
By life, and word make your whole Church  
a Kingdom witness in our land and before the nations.



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