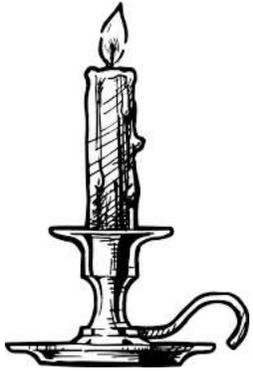


Wednesday, 17th March 2021



THE CANDLESTICK

Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite (Ps. 147:5)

It's St. Patrick's day ... and anyone with a hint of Irishness from as far apart as Sydney to New York to Dublin celebrates his legacy. Of course, they speak about him ridding the snakes from Ireland, and the story of the shamrock and the Trinity, and a few legends and myths as well. However, Patrick wrote prolifically about his work and what he believed.

His story belongs to the fifth century AD when as a kidnapped teenager, he was taken from his home in Britain and sold into slavery on the island of Ireland. During his six years as a slave, he converted to Christianity. He eventually escaped from his slave masters and fled Ireland and began studying to serve God 'full-time'. He received a deep sense of calling to return to Ireland and serve as a missionary to convert the pagan heathen Irish. He did not have much support, though, because many Christians in Britain did not believe the Irish worthy of being saved (... like Jonah and the people of Nineveh?). They were considered to be 'barbarous' and 'untameable', but not as far as God was concerned for He sent Patrick with the Gospel.

Patrick's desire was to win the Irish for Christ, and he went to regions of Ireland where outsiders had never dared to travel. All over the island, he preached to pagans steeped in idol worship, and he introduced them to a new way of life from out of their violent, belligerent culture. His work was Christ-honouring. He wrote, "If I have any worth, it is to live my life for God so as to teach these peoples". His message was plain, and powerful, "He who believes shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be damned. God has spoken".

Despite the Irish, he was convinced God sent him to Ireland, "I am certain in my heart that all that I am, I have received from God" ... He believed and preached to them salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, he wrote, "[God] watched over me before I knew Him, and before I learned sense or even distinguished between good and evil, and He protected me, and consoled me as a father would his son". He preached, "Each and all shall render account for even our smallest sins before the judgement seat of Christ the Lord".

Beyond the legend and the choreographed religious myths and legends, by his own testimony, Patrick was a sinner saved by God's sovereign grace. He was not preaching a message on behalf of or about the Church of Rome, but he brought to the Irish the message about Christ the Redeemer ... he preached Christ crucified. The hatred and suspicion he faced did not weaken his resolve, for he recorded, "Daily I expect to be murdered or betrayed or reduced to slavery ... but I fear nothing, because of the promises of Heaven".

Less than one hundred years later, one of the products of Patrick's evangelism was another missionary called Columba who was instrumental in bringing the Gospel to Scotland, first to the island of Iona and then across to Northumbria.

When we look back through the years, we can plainly see how good God has been to the United Kingdom. Through the witness of faithful men and women, righteousness has indeed exalted our nations (Prov. 14:34). There once was a time when the sun never set on the British Empire ... and from these shores the Gospel travelled all across the globe. How times have changed though, as we have increasingly been witnessing how sin is a reproach, - it condemns, - a sinful people.

Among all the clamour, as Christians, we have one recourse ... and that continues to be the clarion call God made to ancient Israel, If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (II Chron. 7:14) ... Call unto me, and I will answer

thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not (Jer. 33:3) ... Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Is. 55:6,7).

Be assured... The Lord *will* restore the honour of His name on this earth for there is a date in God's calendar when He Himself will rend the heavens and come down, and the mountains will flow with His presence (Is. 64:1). He is 'not slack concerning His promise' (II Peter 3:9), and He will fulfil what He has promised, as He has foretold in His Word how the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10). Frightening times if our faith and confidence was anywhere else but in the Lord Jesus Christ, for as Peter encourages us, Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless (II Peter 3:13,14).

"God, my God, omnipotent King, I humbly adore thee. Thou art King of kings, Lord of lords. Thou art the Judge of every age. Thou art the Redeemer of souls. Thou art the Liberator of those who believe. Thou art the Hope of those who toil. Thou art the Comforter of those in sorrow. Thou art the Way to those who wander. Thou art Master to the nations. Thou art the Creator of all creatures. Thou art the Lover of all good. Thou art the Prince of all virtues. Thou art the joy of all Thy saints. Thou art life perpetual. Thou art joy in truth. Thou art the exultation in the eternal fatherland. Thou art the Light of light. Thou art the Fountain of holiness. Thou art the glory of God the Father in the height. Thou art Saviour of the world. Thou art the plenitude of the Holy Spirit. Thou sittest at the right hand of God the Father on the throne, reigning for ever." (Patrick)

Dates for your diary

- Thursday 18th March 6.30 pm. Bible Study & Prayer Meeting.
Subject –God's promise to Israel, and where we 'fit in'.
- Sunday 21st March 11 am. Preacher – Ian Llewelyn
- Thursday 25th March 6.30 pm. Ruth McCaig,
from *Wycliffe Bible Translators*
- Sunday 28th March 11 am. Subject – Jesus enters Jerusalem
- Thursday 1st April 6.30 pm. Maundy Thursday service

The above meetings will be on *Zoom*. To access via the internet, click <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87128730631?pwd=RkozYlJWl3hFMC9EWitlaDlSamxNQT09>. To access by phone, dial 0203 051 2874, and when asked, enter the meeting ID 871 2873 0631# ... and then the PASSCODE 1689#

DV, we are planning to return to our church building for the Easter Morning service on Sunday 4th April, 11 am, and thereafter.

Please pray for these meetings, and that we shall have no further interruptions.

My series of lectures with *Edinburgh Bible College* were completed yesterday morning (Tuesday). Please pray the students found them helpful. I now await their essays for marking. This morning I was speaking at their end of term service. Please pray for the students over the Easter break. Pray too for Ian and Gail, - I am grateful to them for being with us.

Continue to pray fervently for our witness and testimony in the fellowship, and the Lord will show us a definite sense of His presence and leading.