

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
21st July 2020**

READINGS

Nebuchadnezzar, in a terrible rage, ordered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be brought in before him.

"Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," he demanded, "that you are refusing to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I set up? I'll give you one more chance. When the music plays, if you fall down and worship the statue, all will be well. But if you refuse, you will be thrown into a flaming furnace within the hour. And what god can deliver you out of my hands then?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not worried about what will happen to us. If we are thrown into the flaming furnace, our God is able to deliver us; and he will deliver us out of your hand, Your Majesty. But if he doesn't, please understand, sir, that even then we will never under any circumstance serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have erected."

Daniel 3:139-18 (Living Bible Translation)

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For anyone who keeps his life for himself shall lose it; and anyone who loses his life for me shall find it again.

Matthew 16:24-25 (Living Bible Translation)

"This is the paradox: victory comes through surrender. Surrender doesn't weaken you; it strengthens you. Surrendered to God, you don't have to fear or surrender to anything else."

Rick Warren



REFLECTION

We are told that people are selfish. That we just look out for ourselves and do not care about others. Throughout lockdown we have seen actions that challenge that view. People who are willing to help out neighbours and friends. People who will visit, shop, keep an eye on others in need. Even locally we have seen so many people willing to join the Covid 19 support group organised by the churches – many of them who have no connection with the church whatsoever. But, we have seen the plenty of evidence the other way as well - the crowded beaches and parks, the folk who refused to respect lockdown.

Sinfulness is allowing other things to usurp the place that rightly belongs to God and Jesus teaches his followers that being a disciple means that we have to put God first in our lives, before all else. What is more important to us than God? What would cause you to look back when Jesus calls out 'Follow me'?

We are not asked to be people who reject everything in the world, or people who live with nothing and no one. Life is a God-given gift to be lived. Family and friends are precious. Our skills and gifts are part of what define us and giving our best with those skills and gifts is being true to how God has fashioned us to be. There is nothing wrong with celebrating all of these and so much more in our lives. But we step into sin when we place anyone of these as the most important part of our lives, for we relegate God from his place as king.

Jesus' call is to be answered with our all.

PRAYER

Almighty God,
Above and beyond all others,
God who is more -
More holy than any sanctuary
More loving than any other
More powerful than the mightiest force,
More than we could ever imagine or describe.

You respond to us not with fury because of our sinfulness
but with grace,
Not with condemnation
But with forgiveness.

In our lives,
where we have allowed other things to become more important than you
we are sorry,
where we have put aside our devotion and our discipleship,
preferring worldly rewards,
we are sorry.

Invigorate our faithfulness,
Deepen our devotion,

So that,
Hearing your call
We live only to serve and please you,
Living, Loving Lord God.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen

