

Church Family Newsletter 14th May 2020

Foolish or wise? A thought for today from Reader Roy Goodship

The other day I noticed there was a programme on the television to celebrate one of the long running comedies we are all familiar with – Dad's Army. I am sure you will remember the various characters and their well-known catchphrases. Corporal Jones would often perk up with 'permission to speak sir' and at some point, private Fraser was bound to say 'we're all doomed'. Perhaps most of all we all waited for the inevitable comment to be made by captain Mainwaring to private Pike –'you stupid boy!' Of course, the humour revolves around the self-importance of Arthur Lowe's character which often comes out in the way he looks down on others. But I suppose when we hear remarks from others, we will have our own ideas as to what is stupid or intelligent. Who are the wise guys and who are the fools?

There are two key statements made in the scripture which give us the answer to the question. The first statement comes in Psalm 14.1 which says 'The fool says in his heart, there is no God'. It is clear from the next verse that the wise thing to do is to seek after God but it goes on to say that 'there is none that does good, no, not one'. The failure to find wisdom is likely to lead us into the wrong behaviour.

The second key statement is Psalm 111.10 which says 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. Here the sense is that if we fear the Lord and we follow His will as revealed in scripture in this way we will have a true understanding of the world and how to live in it. The fear of the Lord is the wise option because if we are made in the image of God it makes sense to follow God's guidance – if we do then everything begins to fit.

So, these are the two starting blocks – either the position of the fool who says there is no God or the fear of the Lord. Where are you starting from? The correct starting point obviously depends on the facts.

In the beginning of the letter to the Romans when the apostle Paul is unfolding the great truth of the gospel, he appeals to the outstanding fact of creation to prove the existence of God. In Romans 1.20 he says 'Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So, they are without excuse'. But the all-important fact which was emphasised in the early sermons and teaching of all the apostles was the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15 the apostle Paul deals with the evidence for the resurrection and says plainly in verse 20 'But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead....' He treats it as a fact; he says it is a fact. Which of the two starting blocks is true?

When psalm 14 describes someone as 'a fool' this is not a suggestion that the person has a low IQ but at the simplest level it is just pointing out that the assertion that 'there is no God' is an uninformed view. It would be a catastrophe if we spent our lives in ignorance like the fool described in the psalm. But here is the good news. When Paul was preaching to the elders of Athens on the Areopagus he says Acts 17.30 'The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead'