

**Life Group Notes**  
**Sunday 24 March 2019**

**Speaker:** Richard Walker

**Title:** Do Not Fear What They Fear

**Passage:** Isaiah 8:11-20

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For those who like a bit more historical context, [click here](#).

**Verses 11-15 Fear God more than the times you live in.**

The stakes were high in Isaiah's day. There was international tension and the threat of invasion. But even with this threat of death looming large, the Lord puts his "strong hand" on Isaiah and tells him to fear God more than these things. Fearing God means recognising that you and I are worthy of judgement from God, but instead get kindness and favour. It means the first factor in decision making is "What does the Lord say?" It means fearing his displeasure if we disobey him.

**Verses 16-18 The Sign of Disaster and Restoration**

Isaiah and his sons were prophetic signs that disaster was coming in the land, but that restoration would follow. Hebrews 2:13 picks up this image and says that Christ and his church are now the sign to the world that disaster is coming – God will judge the earth, but those who are in Christ will come out the other side into eternal life. That's the big story, not Brexit.

**Verses 19-22 The (Self)-Destruction of Not Listening to God.**

The people run to the spirit mediums, asking them to consult the dead, for insights into the future, but God says the dead are no help when it comes to solving the riddles of human existence. Part of the madness of sin is that we prefer to consult dead things rather than the living God over the things that matter. That attitude will only lead to catastrophe. In our day we consult big data and polls, which are fine to a point, but again, opinion polls will not solve the riddles of human existence.

**So how do we then live?**

**1. Don't fear the times. Invest in the Kingdom.**

Please don't let fear and worrying about your future material prosperity make you put your service for Christ on hold. Nothing done in the name of Jesus and for his honour is ever wasted. Let the truth that you can't take anything with you into the next life apart from people shape how you live and invest yourself in this life now. Don't just invest in the people who promote your interests / sense of self-worth, but also in those who cannot give you anything in return.

**2. Stop moaning. Pray for your leaders.**

We are commanded to do this in 1 Tim. 2:1-4. Not only to pray for them but give thanks for them!! Was Paul a nutjob? No, he knows that what is even more important than political freedom and material prosperity is godliness. He recognised that if you can't pray for and give thanks for those in authority, then you still have your heart too set on the things of this life. If you didn't you wouldn't moan so much. That doesn't give leaders an excuse for bad or selfish governance, just means that God can work all things together for our good, not just the circumstances we like.

**3. Beware the headlines. Behold God's story.**

Don't believe everything you read in print, especially if it agrees with your own bias! Beware getting carried away with the hysteria of the headlines which are there to influence you and make money off you and your fears/desires as much as they are there to inform you. One of the beautiful things about the Bible is that the more you know it and the God who wrote it, the more of an anchor it becomes in your soul holding you steady when everything around you seems to be moving. Why? Because the God who

wrote it loves you and because history repeats itself. Whilst the details might be different, the dynamics are the same because the human heart hasn't changed. If you are addicted to the news cycle and Brexit things are consuming you. Switch off the media and get help.

#### **4. Forget your entitlement. Remember the poor.**

At a time like this, we can spend a lot of time thinking about how our life might change. But those who will be hit hardest are the poor, and that was true long before Brexit was ever on the table. Reading has the second highest average wage in the UK, but that average masks a huge gap between the rich and poor. Reading is the fourth worst town for income inequality in the UK. Whether you fear the nasty nationalism that you think Brexit represents or the ghastly globalism that you think the EU represents, the vulnerable in society will always be the losers and there are many of them in our town.

#### **5. Honour your community. Belong to Christ.**

Our primary identity must not be our political allegiances or voting record, but the fact that God has made us his own and brought us into his family. Whilst we cannot pretend that differences between us don't exist, we must get past those differences and move towards each other in love. By all means, get involved in politics and activism, but don't let that allegiance trump your allegiance, love and service to Christ and his people.

#### **Suggested Questions:**

1. What's your greatest fear at the moment / in life? How does God's command to fear him more than anything else hit you? Do you find that hard to accept? How can you get to a place where (in your gut, not just in your head) you fear God more than other thing(s)?
2. Which of the five "How should we then live statements hit you the hardest? Why? What needs to change? If things get heated, remember no. 5. :-)

Spend time in prayer for each other, for the government and for the nation.