

**2021-05-02 ... 6.30pm Evening Prayer Sermon ... Revd Sue Armstrong**

**Isaiah 60: 1 – 14; Revelation 3: 1 – 13**

Throughout the prophecy of Isaiah, over 40yrs, there have been warnings of what will happen to those who have turned from God, but also the encouragement of what God gives to those who have been faithful to him and how he is keen to welcome those who repent and turn to him.

Throughout his life, Isaiah praised God ... he warned and brought knowledge of his love and spoke of God's longing to forgive, and the glories to come for the faithful.

This reading tells of the spread of God's love, naming the places from which people will come, bringing gifts to offer glory to God.

**Reading verses 13 – 14 (from Isaiah 60)** reminded me of attending St George's Church, the worshipping community there in Beirut – the joint services shared with the Palestinian Christians – and how the prayers in both English and Arabic rose to praise God.

But also I am reminded of Father Andevog – who had established a Christian residential and training centre for profoundly deaf people in the Lebanese foothills. He brought his flock to join our worship every 3 months or so. From a well-to-do family in the Netherlands he devoted his life to working with those who were deaf and travelling to Europe to fund raise – which, as things changed in Lebanon and the Middle East, became more and more dangerous.

His gifts and dedication brought many to faith and also equipped them to be able to contribute to society – something they would not have been able to do without his help and guidance.

**In our second reading (Revelation 3)** again we have very visual descriptions in this Revelation to John; again we have warnings including some of the sayings frequently used within the English language aimed at stirring up a response – God's perceptions are very different to those of his people **verse 1**, yet he is still ready to welcome those who are faithful, the encouragement is still there, the opportunity to turn back to him and be welcomed.

These churches in the Decapolis seem to bear quite marked resemblances to churches of our own time – there are lessons to be learned.

God's expectations are different to those of ours, his values are different but his love and forgiveness are always there with his welcome for those who truly seek to serve him and live in his ways. Amen.