

October 24, 2016

I have been finding our study book very interesting. In particular I appreciated Bishop Spong's ability to analyse the meaning of each old testament book and more or less rate each book. Some books only merited a sentence or two from him but I was delighted to find that his interpretation of his favourite section of the Old Testament is the most exciting part of his book so far for me also. The book, or part of the book in question, was II Isaiah. It was written during the time that the Jewish peoples got back to Israel from Babylon and faced the fact that their dream promised land was actually a complete wasteland. They also faced the fact that they were outcasts and had had almost three generations of being slaves. They did not have the power of a temple, a civilization, or the power of physical, mental, religious or military strength. In modern terms we might say they didn't have status, wealth, health, education, faith, etc.

II Isaiah, came forward with a new theology, that Spong calls a new break-through in human consciousness, that would not only make sense for the Jews in that situation, but which very much needs to be heard and acted on today. He, or she!, said that the Jewish people, personified as The Servant, must not respond to hatred with hatred, that they must simply absorb attacks and return violence with kindness. This Servant would bring life to the world by absorbing the dis-ease of the world and never getting even. As Christians we have heard these particular messages before, whose source was II Isaiah, but the idea of them emanating across the millennia as they do can spark a new consciousness even in us in this room. Truth and awareness can span aeons. This message is critically needed today. Today happens to be the 71st Anniversary of the inauguration of the United Nations. Someone, called II Isaiah in our study book, 2500 years ago transcended the primitive side of our nature, the part that is out to win through the use of power, and which embodies the survival of the fittest mentality. Instead, that person gave a portrait of human life that suggests that life is a gift that is meant to be given in love for another. Spong says that this picture provides a profound hope for a human future, IF we can overcome our survival of the fittest mentality.

What I find particularly exciting in II Isaiah is the concept of human consciousness opening and changing. We need to be open to the goodness that is inside us. We need to fight our demons, and make space for open consciousness to prevail. Eckhart Tolle in his book *The New Earth* says, 'Being aware of the space between thoughts is presence, pure consciousness, the 'I am', emptiness, the Kingdom of God'.

Prayer:

'Maker of the Universe, we pray that we may be open to the message of rising above anger, fear and hatred that the person who was II Isaiah preached. Help us to sow love, pardon, faith, hope, light, joy and understanding. Amen'

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