

SCARBOROUGH BULLETIN

What is happening at Scarborough Baptist Church?

THIS WEEK

THE SOUNDS OF
SILENCE

PRAYER contd



Thank you for joining us this morning, either online or physically. We continue to live in virulent times, with many things we have always taken for granted being challenged and discarded. Christians who once held the moral high-ground suddenly find themselves judged and relegated to the realm of the morally bankrupt. The voices on social media denouncing western culture and Christian values have become louder and more shrill. Christianity has seemingly lost its place to speak on the marketplace of new ideas.

What do we do when we find ourselves lost among all the shouting and denunciations of the morally certain? We need to stop and listen to the quiet voice of God. God is close enough to whisper to us. He does not have to shout. This God continues to speak of love and joy and peace. He speaks into the silence between the angry words.

God can roar like a lion. One day the sound of his voice will drown out all other noise. One day the world will fall silent before him. One day the sound of praise and worship will be all that is heard. But until then, we will gather in silence to hear God's quiet voice.

EVENTS THIS WEEK

Monday morning 9.30am No Bible Study on Zoom or at the church due to holiday

Thursday evening Bible study not happening over the holiday period

Brighton Kids: The holiday programme is starting.

Sundays @ Six: The team is deciding when to restart.

Offering: Please continue using EFT as it needs to be our main means of doing our offering at present. Our bank details are: Scarborough Baptist Church - BSB 306-054 Account number 4186613

Prayer: Please pray **Krina Moore** who is in hospital to help with her ongoing pain. Please pray for **Malcolm Sales** who has a very sore leg and **Iris** who is still struggling with breathing. Please pray for the elders as they continue to serve the church.

We can speak to God because he has made us "respond-able" i.e., able to respond to him when he reveals himself to us. This is due to humanity being created in the image of God. We can respond to God because the God whom we address in our prayers, is able to respond to us. The Second Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55) puts the idea that the God of Israel, in contrast to the gods of the nations, alone is able to respond to the prayers of his people in the forefront of his theology. The prophet was clearly reacting to the situation in which Israel found themselves after being taken into captivity by the Babylonians. The burning question in the minds of the Israelites was whether the exile was not proof that the Babylonian gods were stronger than Yahweh, their covenant God.

In dealing with this issue, the prophet launched a scathing attack on the idols of the Babylonians and their inability to do anything in response to prayer. We read in Isaiah 46 God challenging Israel:



5. *"With whom will you compare me or count me equal?
To whom will you liken me that we may be compared?*
6 *Some pour out gold from their bags
and weigh out silver on the scales;
they hire a goldsmith to make it into a god,
and they bow down and worship it.*
7. *They lift it to their shoulders and carry it;
they set it up in its place, and there it stands.
From that spot it cannot move.
Even though someone cries out to it, it cannot answer;
it cannot save them from their troubles.*

In contrast to the idols, God assures Israel that he has a plan (v. 10b): "I say, 'My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.' Not only does Israel's God have a purpose and a plan, the prophet assures them, but he is also able to turn this plan into reality (v 11): "What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do."

God can respond to the plight of Israel, because unlike the idols, he is not a human creation. He is the creator. He does not have to depend on humans to carry him around and put him in a certain spot. On the contrary, God is the one who has done, and will continue to do the carrying. "I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you (v4)". The God who is "respondable", is also the God who takes responsibility for his people. God, the prophet tells the people, has not forgotten them. He is about to do something new and wonderful. He is about to overthrow the mighty rule of the Babylonians: "From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose." Not only will king Cyrus, defeat the Babylonians, but God will then use him to release the people of Israel and to send them back to their home country. This will not happen, because the Israelites have drawn near to God. Even while in exile, they remained far from God. "Listen to me, you stubborn-hearted, you who are now far from my righteousness" (v12). It will happen because God has taken the initiative: "I am bringing my righteousness near, it is not far away; and my salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, my splendour to Israel" (v 13). The God we pray to, take responsibility for and is ready and able to answer.