

Sermon Archive 236

Sunday 17 March, 2019

Knox Church, Christchurch

Lessons: Isaiah 53: 1-6

1 John 4: 7-12

Preacher: Rev. Dr Matthew Jack



The prophet Isaiah can't believe what he has heard. He has heard of an unjust, senseless crime committed against an innocent man. God had created a human being - and the human being was tender, like a new, green shoot - vulnerable . . . God had watched the human being grow - and although there was no physical majesty, although the human being was in many ways quite like any other human being, God derived great delight in watching him grow. He was something living, something alive, on a landscape that sometimes seemed so dry and dusty. Life seemed to God to be beautiful. So when the dreadful thing happened to him, God didn't want to see. God wanted to look away - but couldn't. God had to look at it, and ask us why. Why had we gone astray? Why had he been despised and held of no account? We might think that we've been asking God "why", but maybe that question is something more properly addressed to us.

Why does our world produce people who hate? Why do we, who speak of our home down here on the bottom of the world as some kind of idyllic sanctuary, put up with people owning machine guns? Why do we allow people, made in the sacred image of God, to be despised? Ah we, like sheep, have gone astray - to the cost of the innocent human being who loses his life, her life, their life. Buried in the body of our faith is the perverse mystery of why the servant suffers. It's just not right.

And so the community responds. The police seek out the criminals. The medics tend to the injured. The families receive their dead. The teachers lock down the children. The psychologists talk about how to talk about it. The politicians seek to make the right announcements. The Christians

open their doors and write their letters. The Muslims cry. In time the courts will make their judgments and the prison officers will turn the key. And for us all, within, there will be a new kind of sorrow - a new kind of "who has believed what we have heard?"

What then?

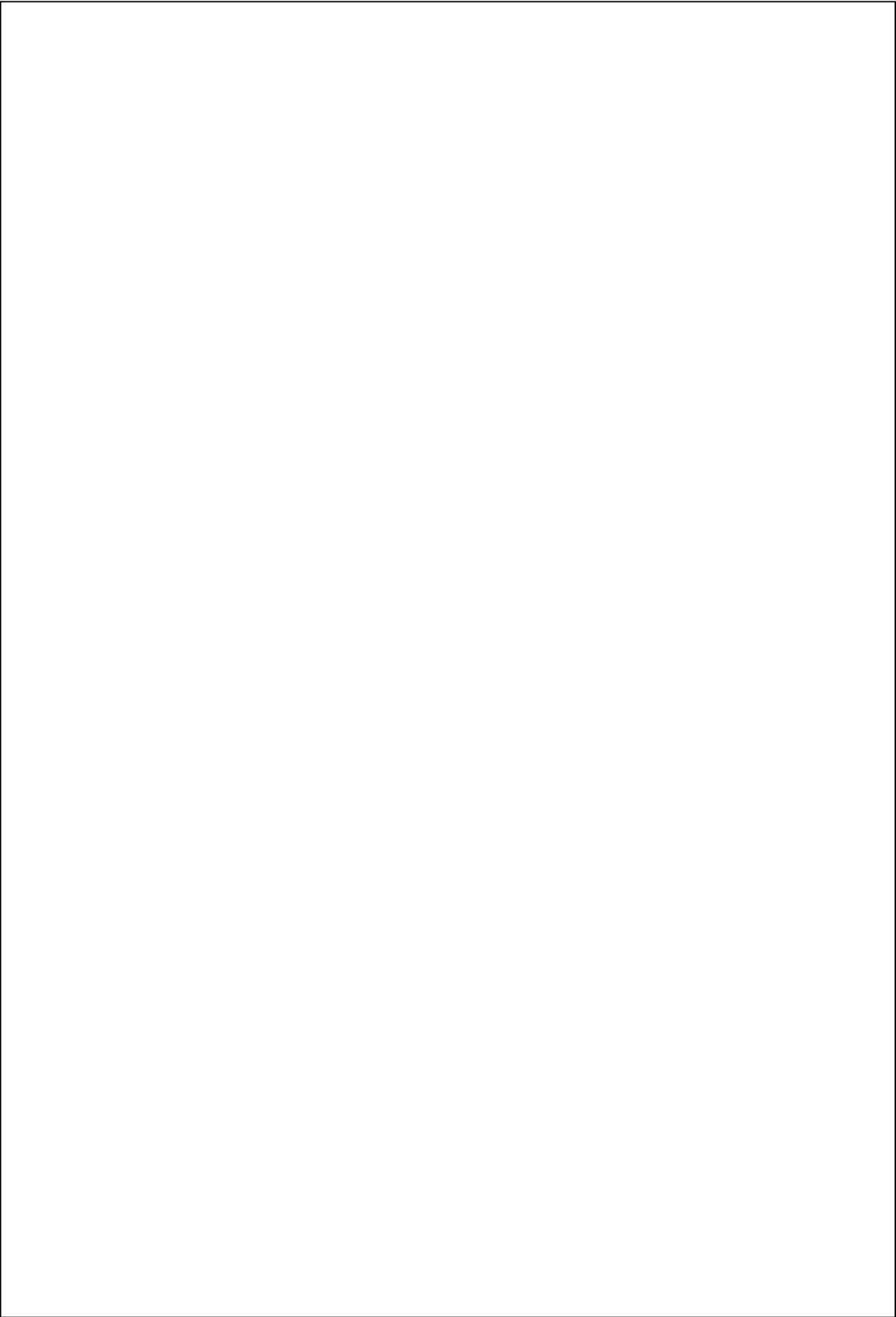
Beloved; let us love another - because love is from God.

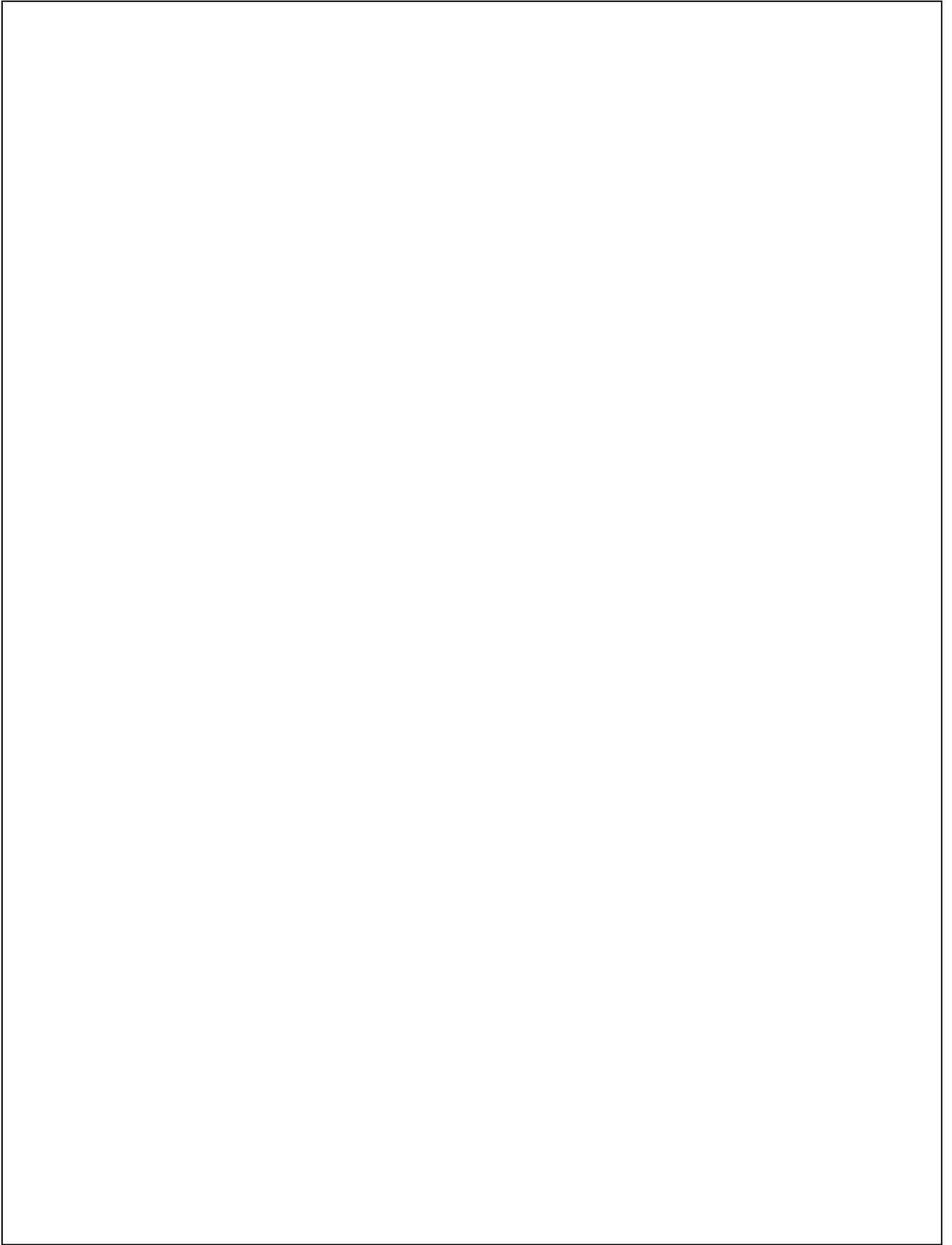
- Lest the sufferer feel that no one cares, let us love one another.
- Lest we allow the violence to define who we are, let us love one another.
- Lest we become what we hate, let us love one another.
- Lest the redeeming work of God not be done, let us love one another.
- Lest God fade from our landscape, let us love one another.

I feel no need to preach at length just now about the nature of love. We all know what love is - what it does. It greets the other. It weeps with the weeping. Love embraces. Love sits silently with. We know all this.

Later in the service there will be time to untangle some of this. There will be time to frame some words, to express our love.

But for now, a moment of quiet.





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