

Read: Revelation 16:8-21*'I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake'***Revelation 16:15a**

Let me tell you about a time that Jason, my husband, shouted at Thomas, our six year old. But before you judge his parenting, let me give you some context. Thomas was on a scooter, whizzing down a hill towards a busy road - and it soon became obvious that he wasn't going to stop. Jason's shout alerted a driver which saved Thomas' life. I hate the sound of shouting, but in that moment, asking Jason not to shout would have been like asking Jason not to love Thomas. Because Jason loves his son, he stepped in to avert disaster. God hates sin. God hates the violence, greed, oppression and injustice that flows from our sinful attitudes and actions - and because He's a loving God, He steps in to intervene. He pours out His justice - and it's not pretty.

John interrupts these nightmare scenarios depicting God's judgement, to shout at us from the pages. 'Wake up!' (v.13) Maybe he's afraid that as readers we are finding the bowls of wrath too much to bear so are skipping past the hard stuff to something more up-beat. Or maybe he fears we're not really appreciating the cosmic seriousness of what's going on here. Either way, his intentions are clear; to shock us into action. 'Stop!' He's saying, 'Unless you wake up, you're heading for disaster. You need to get yourself ready for God's judgement.'

How do we wake up and stay alert? By recognising that we fail to live up to the holiness of God and need to be rescued from God's judgement. We're on a scooter whizzing down a hill and need our Father to intervene to avert disaster. The promise in Scripture is that by surrendering our lives to Christ, we are totally covered up by His goodness (Galatians 3:27); instead of being exposed in our sin, we are clothed in Christ's righteousness. But it's not just about us. What about our friends, family, community - do they know Jesus? Do our lives point them to Him? There will come a day when they will need to face Him. Are they ready? In my experience most of us would prefer not to hear this. Just like six year old boys on scooters! But warnings are there for a reason. To change the end of our story. On the cross, the God who declared '*It is finished*' (John 19:30) brings to completion His plan for all humanity. The judgement sounds harsh, but we need to trust our Heavenly Father that although it's inevitable, it's part of the process of bringing us home and making all things new.

Let us pray: *God of power and might, remove the things that hinder me from receiving Christ with joy so that I may become one with Him when He comes in glory. Amen*

Rachel Gardner, Lay-member of St Luke's, Blackburn.