

1. I've been surprised over the past 10-15 years of my life at just how many people go and hand over their hard earned dollars to fortune-tellers and psychics. Some of these people I've known really well and so have heard comprehensive accounts of what they said and what the fortune-teller or psychic said. At best these people hand out generic predictions and at worst are colluding with the demonic realm. Either way, their clarity and accuracy are deeply and profoundly flawed.

Most of the people paying this money have hit hard times or they're at a crossroad in their life and they get restless and need answers. And they want them now. They're not willing to wait – and so they open their purses and wallets and pay human beings in the hope of an accurate prediction for a better future.

We hear stories like this in the church and think, *"Well that doesn't effect us –surely that all happens out there in the world away from us..."*

2. But the church suffers from a similar problem. Even though Jesus assures you in the parable of the weeds today that God has your future (a glorious future) in his hands, there will be times when that assurance doesn't satisfy you. There will be times when you'll get restless, maybe even try to plan and sure up your own future.

It's an odd situation! We want to know what the future holds for us. We want to know we'll be okay, that there's some security and that things will turn out like we hope. And God gives us an accurate picture with full assurance in His word...a complete and comprehensive picture. He says, *"the righteous shall shine like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father..."*

But for some reason we're not always satisfied with that! It's a deeper issue than simply being restless and impatient. At its root, what we're talking about is a question of trust. My question for you today is whose hands is your future in?

The truth is we're impatient; we lose focus when things get hard. Worst of all, we don't always turn to God when this happens –often we turn to the same things other Australians turn to: our own personal idols.

An idol? What idol?

So let's clarify our terms here today so we're crystal clear. *An idol is whatever you set your heart on and trust in to bring you comfort and relief (x2).* What's that for you?

Idols are often neutral in and of themselves, but when you throw your trust behind them, they become an idol or your own small g god. They might be investments and wealth, Phones and technology, houses, cars, a particular career path or job, sex, fame, stars, sports. Is chocolate an idol? We can make an idol out of almost anything – we're experts at building up idols.

Just ask yourself today, what couldn't I live without? Maybe there's more than one idol competing for your attention!

A famous person in the church said that the human heart is a perpetual idol factory – and he is still right isn't he? But whether its fortune-tellers or false prophets or any of the idols I just mentioned, they all lack something only God gives you with any kind of real perfection..... **100 % Accuracy! ☺**

Only God speaks into your life with 100% accuracy – every single time. Things you set up as idols or small g gods in life will lead you astray- away from God. That's a well-tested fact.

All idols demand sacrifice. So if your job is your idol, you will be asked to sacrifice your family time. If technology is your idol, your relationships will be placed on a sacrificial altar because you won't have time for real people. We don't have time to pile up the sacrificial altar with all the demands money idols require of people.

Idols promise you the world and then NEVER EVER DELIVER on their false promises. They just keep making demands of you. You probably already know that right? They are inaccurate and terribly persistent slave drivers.

3. God's people in Isaiah this morning knew all about slave drivers & idols! They were surrounded by them. Isaiah was a prophet at a tough time in Israel's history – a time of political instability, war and exile. It's hard to imagine the trauma these people have experienced. On a practical level, most have lost their homes, possessions and freedom, and many have lost loved ones in the conflict that led to exile. Could they still look to God after all this had happened to them? You see the ancient people believed that when they went into battle, so did their gods. And so the victorious nation obviously had more powerful gods.

Can you imagine the impact of that belief on the Israelites, whose entire identity is wrapped up in their relationship with Yahweh (our big G God)?

Will God do anything? Should they turn to the small g gods, the idols of other nations and worship them in the land of their captivity? That's how Satan would have tempted them. That's how he tempts all of us too. That's the task of weeds sown in amongst the wheat. To distract, divert, worry and lead the people of God astray.

So would the Israelites discover hope, redemption and a future in idols made with human hands? Or should they turn back to God and find their future hope, identity and forgiveness in Him? **How would you answer that question for yourself?**

4. God has something to say today. Something more impressive than any idol or human prediction. God is telling you about himself today.

v. 6—“This is what the Lord says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.

The Lord uses six names for himself in this verse: **Lord, King, Redeemer, Lord Almighty, first and last, and God. He uses a seventh in verse 8, the Rock.**

- A. He is Lord (יְהוָה), the I am who I am,” as he told Moses at the burning bush in Exodus (Ex 3:14). His name tells you about who God is. It stresses the grace of God, his undeserved love and favor, his mercy, his compassion, his forgiveness. When Moses wanted to see his glory, the Lord told Moses: *“I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, **the Lord**, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion”* (33:19). **He is the LORD – your LORD.**
- B. God calls himself King (מֶלֶךְ). Now we know a king rules, but more importantly, a king fights battles on behalf of his subjects (1 Sa 8:20). In the bible Saul had the title of king, but David did the work of the king. He fought the Israelites' battle for them when he accepted the challenge of the Philistine giant Goliath and took him out with

a stone. Then the people of Israel honored David as their king proclaiming, "Saul has slain his thousands, **and David his tens of thousands**" (1 Sa 18:7).

The reason I mention this is because The Lord met your enemy, Satan, and fought your battle for you and all of us. Not only did he go into battle, but He disarmed Satan by taking away the power he had over you, the power of sin. He paid the penalty for your sins. He took the place of all of us dying for us, rising for us and overcoming the eternal prison of hell. **He is your King.**

- C. The Lord calls himself Israel's Redeemer (גֹּאֲלֵךְ). A redeemer makes the necessary arrangements to set a person free. (Dick Smith in recent news?)
When the Israelites were stuck as slaves in Egypt the LORD declared *"I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment"* (Ex 6:6).
Jesus redeemed you by offering himself in your place. He called you out of slavery to sin and idols with all their demands. He released you from their captivity and made you free through His Holy and precious blood. **He is your redeemer.**
- D. God is Lord Almighty (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת). The NIV says "Almighty". The Hebrew says Lord of hosts. He has the angel armies together with all the rest of creation at his command to do his bidding. He has power, almighty power. Power that you have behind you and in front of you every single moment of every single day. Power that's at work protecting your life. **He is the Lord of Hosts exercising His mighty power in your life today.**
- E. God is the first and the last (רִשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרֵיכֶם). He is everlasting. The first four words of Scripture read, "In the beginning God" (Ge 1:1). When creation began, he was there. When the beginning began, he was there. He is also the last. When the elements melt with the burning heat, the Lord will be there to create new heavens and a new earth. Just like Jesus pointed us all to today in the gospel. **God is the first and the last – and invites you to His Kingdom that surpasses this world.**
- F. The Lord alone is worthy of the title God (אֱלֹהִים). Luther says: "Whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god". ***Who is your God?***
Know today that the Lord and only the Lord deserves the title God – nothing else you turn to for comfort or peace in your life deserves that title. God alone is the sole source of all that is good; he alone provides real, living refuge in times of trouble and distress. **The LORD is your God and He is One.**

v. 7—Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let him foretell what will come.

God points to his record. He is 100% correct when predicting the future – unlike human fortune tellers, idols and false prophets. He doesn't make mistakes; he never has and he never will.

Is there anyone in the past with a 100% correct record in predicting the future? Let him speak. Is there anyone who wants to try his hand at predicting the future and getting it right 100% of the time? Let him speak. God gets it right every time. He has the record to back it up. He challenges anyone to equal that record of the past. He challenges anyone to equal it in the future.

Pentecost 5a – Is 44:6-8 & Matt 13:24-30;36-40
'100% accuracy – every single time'

You are witnesses of the accuracy record of the Lord. Look to the cross today and know that all your sins have been dealt with there. Know with 100% certainty that nothing has been overlooked, nothing has been missed. Know that He is your Rock. He is solid. He is reliable. *When he tells you that your future is secure in His hands, you can trust him.*

Your God is the King, the Redeemer, the Almighty Lord of hosts, the First and the Last, He is Yahweh and he's your Rock.

Just two verses from Isaiah is all it takes to see that the idols we bow down to everyday are worthless, laughable, pathetic, of no value whatsoever in comparison to the God who loves us, redeems our lives and walks with us each day ***in a living relationship.***

This afternoon, tomorrow, this week will you turn to the small g gods of this nation for comfort and help? Know that Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit gives you everything you need so you can trust Him and turn to Him and know that He is the source of all you need in this life. Remember it's a living relationship!

And flowing out of everything you've received from the LORD will you point others to Him when they are looking for direction or struggling under the weight and demands of human idols? Will you point them to Jesus who laid down His life for His friends and has secured a future for God's people beyond anything this world has to offer?

He is the only one who is worthy of the title God. Call on Him and know for certain that your present and your future are 100% secure in His hands. Amen!