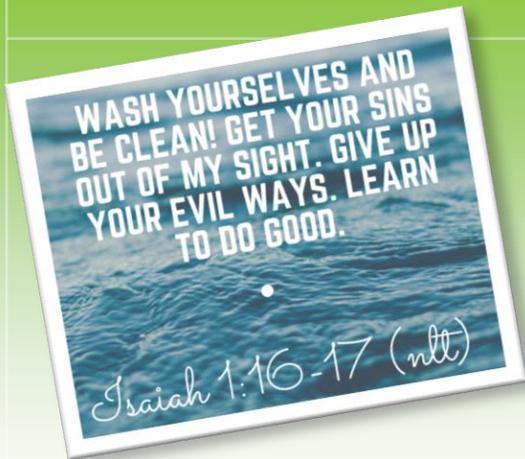


APRIL 2019



Hemyock *Baptist Church*

With Easter approaching, we marvel once more at the redemptive power of the blood of Christ. We are accustomed to asking the Lord to wash us clean after we've done wrong – yet the verse above (*Isaiah 1:16*) commands us to wash ourselves! It's not that we have the authority and ability to remove our own sins, rather we need to repent and put out of our lives those things that facilitate sin. The story goes that at a regular prayer meeting, one individual would pray at length and conclude with: "And Lord, take the cobwebs out of my life." Eventually, a man in the group grew tired of this and one night called out, "And Lord, while you're at it, *kill the spider!*" That sums up what this verse is all about.

Sin defiles us. We see sin in the Bible pictured as darkness, disease, bondage – even death; but commonly as defilement. The Jews had been taught through the law of Moses to distinguish between clean and unclean, not only in foods but in the business of daily life. For example, it was defiling to touch a dead body or someone with a running sore. The rules helped them stay healthy and also reminded them to keep their lives clean so that they could enjoy God's blessings. Today, we may not always take our sins as seriously as we should, but the Lord can see the defilement in our hearts. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear" (*Psalms 66:18*). None of us are sinless, but we should strive to be as clean as possible before God.

We might try and hide our sins from God – which is not only impossible, but also hypocritical. In *Isaiah 1*, we see the sad image of a sinful people offering sacrifices to God in the temple, raising their hands in praise and prayer, only to step outside and sin again and again. They would observe Jewish holy days. They believed their sacrifices and prayers would please the Lord and give everyone else the impression that they were godly people, but they were wrong. We can't fool God with our religiousness. Our sin still alienates us from God and if we're honest, we know when we're walking in darkness rather than in the light.

Only God can deliver us. He invites us "Come now", and his promise is "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (*Isaiah 1:18*). God forgives our sins, but also encourages us to forsake those things that encourage us to sin. "Let the wicked forsake his way" (*Isaiah 55:7*) and start walking in the right way, with the right people. "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). Action is required (*cleanse ourselves*) followed by an ongoing process (*perfecting holiness*).

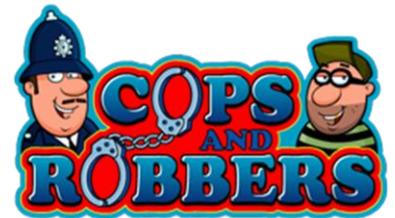
If we wash ourselves and make ourselves clean, we prove that we are serious about living a holy life and can enjoy to the full the God-given renewal embodied in the Easter message.

Pastor Steve



Friday 26th April, 4-6PM

It's Messy Church time again on Friday 26th April – so come along and enjoy all the fun with us; crafts, songs (with some world class Dad-dancing), stories and a meal together... See you there!



Hemyock Holiday Club

Before we know it, it'll be here – the 50th anniversary Hemyock Holiday Club is coming, so save the dates: Monday 29th July – Friday 2nd August!

This year the theme is 'Cops & Robbers' and we're all looking forward to having a great week together once again. So police come along and enjoy some arresting performances and a bit of jailhouse rock!