

SERMON NOTES FOR SUNDAY 30TH AUGUST 2020.

Lectionary Readings; Jeremiah 15, 15-21; Psalm 26, 1-8; Romans 12, 9-21; Matthew 16, 21-28.

In Psalm 26, we have a both a plea for Justice and a Declaration of Righteousness. Although the Psalmist takes the moral high ground and seems very keen to remind God that they have “Walked in integrity and trusted in the Lord without wavering” (Verse 1). It does remind me of the Gospel account of the Pharisee and the Tax collector, with the writer of this psalm very keen to point out their own righteousness and the sins of others. Sadly, it is an attitude we can all be guilty of at times.

It is good that this Psalm is included in scripture, as it tells us much about human nature. However, the previous Psalm, Psalm 25 would be a much better inspiration for our prayers of confession.

In a similar way Jeremiah is quick to point out to God, verse. 17. “I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice; under the weight of your hand I sat alone, for you had filled me with indignation”. It is not trite to point out that merrymakers can teach us all a great deal, it depends on context. Looking back as a child growing up on the Hainault estate in Essex, I was blessed indeed to live next door to Pat and Henry, who were always laughing. True I did not always know the reason for their laughter, but as a child their peals of laughter felt like music to the ears and food for my soul. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father is a merry maker offering a party; and Jesus himself would be accused of much the same thing, entertaining and welcoming many people others rejected. And what of that wonderful first miracle in Cana of Galilee? Huge amounts of water turned into wine. If that is not merrymaking of the first degree, I am not sure what is!

In our Jeremiah reading, after Jeremiah has had a real grumble at God, we hear wonderful words of invitation offered to him (and to us). Verse 19 “There, thus says the Lord; If you turn back, I will take you back, and you shall stand before me.”

In both the set Psalm reading and our reading from Jeremiah and indeed our Gospel reading, where Peter misreads and misunderstands the nature of Messiah, we are confronted with a host of misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the very nature of God. The challenge for us is to try to see our own blind spots, for we will all have many.

In our set Epistle reading, Romans 12 verses 9-21 Paul gives us some excellent guidelines in pinpointing and identifying how we are called to “Make Merry for God”. Paul advocates real costly joy, one of our callings many paradoxes. Please do read this set Epistle in its entirety, it is a real gem. In the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible it is entitled “Marks of the True Christian” and simply begins, “Let your love be genuine.....”

A Prayer;

O Lord we Pray that despite all our sin, known and unknown, seen and unseen, our love for you and others may always and ever be genuine in its intent and purpose.

Help us good Lord to share a joyful, costly and inclusive Gospel message for your glory and your name's sake. Amen.

Rev'd Diane

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