

Trinity 17. 9 October 2022. Tidenham Parish.

Collect

Almighty God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you: pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself, and so bring us at last to your heavenly city where we shall see you face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. AMEN.

(or)

Gracious God, you call us to fullness of life: deliver us from unbelief and banish our anxieties with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Post Communion

Lord, we pray that your grace may always precede and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

2 Timothy 2:8-15

⁸ Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, ⁹ for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. ¹⁰ Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. ¹¹ The saying is sure:

If we have died with him, we will also live with him;

¹² if we endure, we will also reign with him;

if we deny him, he will also deny us;

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful—

for he cannot deny himself.

¹⁴ Remind them of this, and warn them before God^[a] that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. ¹⁵ Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth.

Luke 17:11-19

¹¹ On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. ¹² As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, ¹³ they called out, saying, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!' ¹⁴ When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were made clean. ¹⁵ Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. ¹⁶ He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ Then Jesus asked, 'Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they?' ¹⁸ Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' ¹⁹ Then he said to him, 'Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.'

SERMON. Revd David Treharne, Vicar. The Gospel is Personal.

(Optional humour to start)

Over the years we have heard it said that if you hear a message and then hear it again, and it keeps coming to you from different directions then perhaps the Lord may be trying to speak to you. It's something that happens when we test a vocation. We hear the call time and time again. Therefore, I'm wondering if the Lord has been trying to say something to me this last week as I've heard the following little story 3 times!

One day after a church service a little boy told his minister, "When I grow up, I'm going to give you some money." The pastor replied "Well, thank you, but why?" "Because my daddy says you're one of the poorest preachers we've ever had."

Hmmm, the Lord moves in mysterious ways!

(Prayer). Lord, speak to us now. As we unpack your word may we live life together in the flow of your love.

The Gospel is Personal

I have preached for years that our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Gospel and the Church is relational... communal. Christian faith is about 'we' and 'us', not just 'I' and 'me'. However, as I have reflected on the Scriptures for today I have sensed the Lord wanting me to draw out the personal.

Yes, the Gospel is for *us*, but it's also important to realise it is for me and it is for you. God's love and our response is **personal** as well as communal.

Today's famous Gospel story is about a community of people with dis-ease, but a significant point of the story is about a personal response; namely the ONE person within the group who is healed of his disease and returns to the source of that healing and restoration. This individual with thanks praise responded differently to Jesus than the other 9. In his return to the author of his salvation this person's healing extends to his spirit as well as his body and relationships. This individual not only finds healing but finds **wholeness!**

Luke's Gospel has much to say about the personal and the individual. Mary's praise (Luke 1:46-56), Zechariah's praise (Luke 1:67-79), Simeon's and Anna's praise (Luke 2:27-38); the *one* lost sheep the *individual* prodigal Son (Luke 15), the *ONE* thing you lack (Luke 18:22), the *One* thing Martha needed (Luke 10:42). There is loads of Gospel material that is personal and particular.

So today I want to remind you that the Gospel is for you, not just for our neighbour, or our community, or our world. The Lord wants relationship with **you**. He wants to heal **your** dis-ease. He wants **you** to be whole. He wants **you** to respond to his love and find **your** identity and purpose. He wants **you** to be cleansed and set on a right path. Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again for **you!** He pours out his love and Spirit on **you** to be transformed and live well through this transitory life.

He wants **you** to natter with him and sit with him and call out to him.

It is not uncommon for people to say to me "throw one up to the Boss for me Vicar." And yes of course I will and of course we should ask others to pray for us. However, there can be some kind

of thing in us that wants to live our relationship with God through others and not for ourselves personally.

Last week I was so moved to see and hear Lewis and Roseanna make public confession of faith... a **personal** confession of faith. Wow, wasn't it humbling to hear their personal testimonies?

During the service the Bishop said in turn to both of them ...

"Are you ready with your own mouth and from your own heart to affirm your faith in Jesus Christ?"

A personal question with a personal response.

And later on, *"God has called you by name and made you his own."*

Sisters, brothers... God has called you! "Who me?" "Yes, you!! I have called you by name!" It's personal.

What might the Lord be saying to you personally today? Might he be calling out to you?

(Personal Identity)

We mostly name this gospel story 'the healing of the 10 lepers.' These 10 were known and defined personally and corporately as 'dis-eased' persons. They were named 'lepers.'

Yet in their healing encounter with, in and through Jesus they were redefined. They were given a new identity and new life.

Our lives are blighted by many things and most of us will be defined by others or by ourselves in some negative way (labels!!!). Indeed, I think 'identity' is a crisis issue of our time... although in fairness it probably has always been so. "Who am I? What am I? Why am I here?" These are questions many are asking and struggling with personally.

Our Christian faith and our God has a powerful personal message in and to a floundering world. "You are my beloved child." "I have call you by name." "I have made you for myself and your heart is restless until it finds its rest in me."

Yes, we need to define reality... the dis-eases in us. Yes, define our sin, our weakness our frailty, our struggles with life and the world, our individual and corporate powerlessness and brokenness, but these should not define our whole person, our identity, our life and future.

God's love, faith and trust in the Lord, following the way of Jesus, defines us, gives us identity, gives us an anchor point, gives us purpose and direction in our lives. Remember Archbishop Justin Welby's words when he was being defined by his past? "I am who I am because I am in Jesus Christ." "***In Christ***"... that famous term of the New Testament... In Christ, in Jesus Christ, we can find our hope, our compass, our identity, our healing and wholeness and our true selves.

Whilst I was off for 2 months, one piece of reading I did was a book about the Trinity (A Way into the Trinity). The Roman Catholic author shared his experiences of life and the persons of the Trinity. I struggled with some of it but there were some really helpful insights. The author, a priest, talks about his own sense of disorder and dis-ease in life, and particularly with his mental health and identity. In one part of the book he talks about a scale of mood...numbered 0-10. The one extreme of 0+1... he describes as a state of depression and feeling suicidal. The other extreme of 9+10... he describes as a state of being an out of control panic manic state.

Number 5 in the middle is defined as a place of perfect balance, equilibrium and wellbeing.

What this priest noticed was that when he went towards the 0&1 (depression/Suicidal) he was in a state of self-loathing and his definition of self was that he was worthless rubbish; whilst going towards the 9 & 10 (manic) he noticed that he became over confident and self-reliant and "I can do anything..."

He described finding the mid point, 5, a point he called 'the still point'. 'When I think I'm rubbish and start self loathing... I remember I am God's child, not rubbish. I dwell on this, speak this and identify as this!'

'When I get manic and too high and mighty and I think that I am God I remember I am God's child... I am **NOT** God.'

In this identity as God's child he found an anchoring to a still point. His story challenges the reader to find that anchor... identity... and still point too.

Finally (optional)... In the leper's prayer we have some parts of what we call 'the Jesus Prayer'... that is, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy." If you are looking for a simple prayer to pray personally, this prayer is great. It's a go to prayer for me.

"Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus is Lord... Lord over all. Lord over life, death, disease and desolation.

"Jesus." There's power in this name. Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, our Saviour, the anointed one. Lord over all, divine, yet human, with me, beside me. His words redefine us.

"Have mercy." I have dis-ease. I cannot deal with my dis-ease... so have mercy on me Lord. I reach out personally in my brokenness, sinfulness and powerlessness to the power of your eternal unfailing mercy and love.

Prayer to end...

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me. Thank you for reaching out to me personally. I receive your mercy and love poured out for me. May I find my identity and rest (unthreatened wellbeing) in you.