

Sermon: 28 August 2022

Jeremiah 2: 4-13

Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16

Luke 14: 1, 7-14

May the words of my lips

And the meditations of all our hearts

Be now and always acceptable to you,

O Lord our strength and our redeemer.

Amen

From our vestry day and parish consultation.

St Hilda's – a vibrant, faith-based presence within our community.

Aims:

- **Home groups** : up and running by July 2023 (*leaders to meet 4-6 weekly*)
- **Regular rhythms of Prayer** : [beyond weekly Eucharist] Vestry + monthly prayer by Advent 2022, Expand to parish & community by Advent 2023
- Hall/church as **community hub**. Buildings used for community – facing group activities. 7 day a/week by Easter 2024

Following on from: our vestry day, Roger Wigglesworth's sermon and the parish discussion last Sunday, there is a real sense that we keep these matters front and centre in our prayers, discussions as we gather together.

We have three readings today and we should thank: for their readings.

How do these reading speak to us, to where we have been, where we are as a parish or worshipping unit and where God would have us journey.

Jeremiah 2: 4-13

We heard from Jeremiah 1 last week introducing Jeremiah's prophetic ministry
Jeremiah 2 introduces us to the content of his preaching. I encourage you to go back and read verses 1-3

Where are we as we listen to this reading?

- Are we part of the narrative? Jeremiah was probably delivering this message around the turn of the 6th century with the threat from the rising of Babylon. Judgement is looming.
- Or are we part of the audience hearing this book later; after judgement and when restoration was hoped for?
- Or today?

Dr. Randy L. Hyde likens the Jerimiah reading today to a lawsuit, Israel is the defendant on the witness stand with Jeremiah, the prosecuting attorney asking the questions.

What wrong did your fathers find in me?

Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?

And the indictment..... My people have changed their glory.....

They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water,

And dug out cisterns for themselves (Cisterns are used for storing water not sources of water themselves. They were often man-made (like the idols worshipped) and if not carefully looked after could hold stagnant, unhealthy water, mud. Ironically Jeremiah was later lowered into a cistern and left to die – then rescued by the Babylonians.

Richard Niell Donovan: says “Jeremiah called the people of Israel to love God and to put him in first place in their lives.....

There is a challenge for us in this reading, how does this apply to us? How do we respond?

- How has God blessed us in the past?
- How is God still blessing us in the present?
- How and why do we overlook the blessings that result from our relationship with God?
- What can cause us to look elsewhere than to God for our source of meaning? What can prevent us from realizing we are in danger of doing so?
- How can we develop a relationship with God that will keep us focused on our commitment to God?

Hebrews 13: 1-8, 15-16

The letter to the Hebrews is coming to a close

Barclay outlines five essential qualities of the Christian Life:

- Brotherly love. Mutual love in the NRSV. The Greek word Philadelphia meant love for one's siblings. Here it refers to the form of love expressed among members of the Christian community. Taking their religion as seriously as they did was in one sense a danger. How combine earnestness in the faith and a kindness to those who have strayed from it.
- Hospitality – guest friendship
- Sympathy for those in trouble
- Purity. Barclay quotes Pliny “they bound themselves by an oath not for any criminal end but to avoid theft or robbery or adultery, never to break their word nor repudiate a deposit when called upon to refund it...”
- Contentment

13: 7-8

- The real leader of the Church preaches Christ
- Leaders live in the faith – not so much to talk about Christ as to show them Christ in their own life.
- Loyalty never stops halfway. Shows how to live and are prepared to show them how to die.
- Leave an example and an inspiration

Jesus Christis the same yesterday and today and for ever.

It is in the nature of things that all earthly leaders must come and go.

Of verses 15-16 Tom Wright notes: “the result of it all, again, is glad and uninhibited worship.This, is the ‘sacrifice’ that God really wants. God wants people who will name the name of Jesus, in prayer, worship and testimony, even if it costs them dear.”

Luke 14: 1, 7-14

Tradition and scholarship has the author as Luke a Gentile Christian. Written about 80 CE Luke is the Gospel for the Gentiles. In a world where status and relationships were defined by patronage & obligation this reading has reversals of social status and some direction to radical hospitality.

Jesus goes to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to attend a meal. Jesus goes where asked or is the scene being set for what follows. The NRSV has the Pharisees 'watching him closely'. The word used here is in the sense of watching with interest and sinister – espionage. Contrast this with Jesus 'noticing' how the guests choose their places.

There is a sense of importance, satisfaction, self-interest, superiority, a jostling for position. Jesus issues a warning against pushing oneself forward in the sight of God demonstrating how well you kept the law and maintained.

After delivering a parable on humility Jesus goes on to some pretty radical suggestions for hospitality, who to invite to dinner parties. There is division between the Jewish Christians who found it difficult to accept that the party Jesus to which issues Jesus issues invitations is also for those non- Jews who had become Christians. Tom Wright notes All Christians are called to the same healthy dependence on God's love and the same generosity in sharing it with those in need.

- “Hospitality, then, is not having each other over on Friday evenings but welcoming those who are in no position to host us in return. Nor does the text speak of sending food to anyone; rather, the host and the guest sit at table together. The clear sign of acceptance, of recognizing others as one's equals, of cementing fellowship, is breaking bread together.” (Fred Craddock, [Interpretation: Luke](#))

The readings are not just a theoretical study but should be looked, at wrestled over, applied. What do they tell us?