

28/6/20 Trinity 3 (week 15)

Hello to you all.

As ever, continuing to keep you all in prayer. Firstly, let me indulge by sharing my joy that Liverpool FC are Premier League Champions!! Hooray!!

Today Fran is 'virtually' licensed as Lay Worker to the Wigan West Hub. And whilst we can't be with her, we send Fran and Gary our love and prayers as Fran begins a new ministry in Wigan. We are sad to lose them both as they have been a part of the Church family of the Resurrection for a long time, and we pray that the welcome they receive in Wigan will help them to settle in and feel supported in the parishes they will belong to.

Thinking about welcome, today's short reading from Matthew 10:40-42 is about Christian welcome and hospitality as Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."

Jesus is teaching how important hospitality is to all, whoever they are. We will have heard the verse from Hebrews 13:1-2 which says "Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

Our love for God can be measured by our attitude towards others. Very often, lots of things we do will go unnoticed, we don't get any 'reward' for but we are called to selflessly care for others as God cares for us which echoes the line in the prayer of St Ignatius of Loyola: "To labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that we do your will."

In the context of Jesus' time, it was usual for Jewish people to receive an envoy or a messenger, feeling that it was the same as actually receiving the person themselves. Reading one of my commentaries, it spoke of four links in this passage which flow into each other and illustrate this. Firstly, God created the world out of His goodness and love and sent Jesus to save mankind. Secondly, Jesus himself brought the message of God's love and redemption. Thirdly, the 'righteous' person (prophets, disciples) pass on all they've learned about this message after receiving it themselves. And finally, those sent from God and the believer who receives the message as if it were straight from the one who sent it, subsequently receiving new life through what they learn.

Whether it's something we say or do for others, actions big or small, it is because of what we have received and is what makes us great in God's eyes. When Paul visited the church in Galatia he became ill, and though it was a trial to those who received him, he was welcomed and in chapter 4:14 he said, "You welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself " and this is the welcome and hospitality that Jesus calls us to, serving others as if they were Jesus himself.

Again, whilst reading around, I found this story about a man called Martin who was a Roman Soldier and a Christian. One bitterly cold winters day he met a beggar along the road asking for alms. The beggar was blue, shivering with cold but Martin had nothing to give him. But what he did was took off his soldier's cloak, though it was frayed and battered, cut it in two with his sword and gave one half to the beggar. Later that night in a dream, he saw heaven and angels and amongst them was Jesus who was wearing half of a Romans soldier's cloak. One of the angels asked him why he was wearing such a battered old cloak and who had given it to him. Jesus answered, "My servant Martin gave it to me." Martin went on to become the Bishop of Tours and is commemorated on the 11th November in the Church of England. He is also a saint and has a shrine in Tours which is on the famous pilgrimage route, the Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

This really touched me. I'd never heard this story before and I thought it really summed up what Jesus was saying; simple impulsive generosity is what will bring us joy and our reward is knowing that we are helping Jesus himself.

It is a privilege - and a responsibility to represent Jesus before others, and that others represent him before us. Wherever there is welcome or hospitality, Jesus is present. Simple things we do in our life will bless others and through them, we will be blessed ourselves.

Amen

With Love and Prayers

Rev Tracey xx