

Reflection - 2nd Sunday after Pentecost
14/06/2020
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Genesis 18: 1-15 (21:1-7)	Sarah laughs at God when he says she will bear Abraham a son
Psalms 116: 1-2, 11-18	I give thanks to the Lord for he has heard me
Romans 5: 1-11	Rejoice in Hope because of what Jesus has done
Matthew 9:35-10.8 (9-23)	Jesus urges his followers to pray for Workers and Sends out the Twelve

Introduction

As I was reading through today's bible readings there was so much that we could look at, but three theme's seemed to stand out:-

- Believe
- Rejoice
- Proclaim

This morning I would like to have a look at these three theme's in the light of our readings from scripture, and see what we might take away to challenge and encourage us as followers of Jesus.

Believe

Firstly what do we believe? As Christians, believing is more than saying there is a God that exists. In James 2:19 we hear "Even the demons believe - and shudder." As Christians, we believe that Jesus is the way to God. To believe is to put all of our faith, and all of our trust, and all of our hope in what Jesus has done for us on the cross, and we are then called to follow Jesus in our lives. As human beings we are created to live in relationships, and the most important relationship is the one we have with the God who created us.

So let turn to today's bible readings and see what we might learn about belief.

Firstly in Genesis we have an example of unbelief. In one sense I feel sorry for Sarah, because it would be quite normal for her to doubt God's messengers who brought the news that she would have a child. Sarah was well passed her child bearing years, but when we believe in God, when we trust in God, we have to make room for the power of God to be manifest in our lives. With God we should believe and sometimes even expect the unexpected.

I recall late one afternoon being called to the Hospital to see a man who had a medical episode and was very unwell. When I arrived the family and the doctor were in the room. The medical staff explained to me that they had done all they could and he was not expected to make it through the night. We prayed and entrusted him into God's care. When I went to the hospital in the morning to see the family, he had made a remarkable recovery. He had regained consciousness and his vital signs were turning around. The doctors were confused and said there was no explanation except for a miracle. Don lived down the road from me, he used to pick the same fragipani's off our tree to give to his wife, that I gave to Leeza. A couple of years later Don died and I took his funeral. Entrusting him to God's care had unexpectedly given his family many precious moments together.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, we hear what belief and faith does for us:-

Romans 5: 1,10,11 - ¹Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

It is by putting our faith in Jesus, in his death and resurrection, we can be assured that our sin which cuts us off from God has been overcome. And that is why Jesus tells his followers to proclaim the "Good News" that the Kingdom of God has come near.

Rejoice

The belief that we are reconciled to God through Jesus, even in spite of our fallen human nature, should fill us with great Joy. It doesn't mean of course, that we will always be happy, but as Christians we should be filled with "the peace of God which passes all understanding." No matter the challenges we face, as Christians we should live with an underlying joy in our lives.

The Psalmist gave thanks to God, and rejoiced in knowing God. In psalm 116 today we hear of continuing to pay vows to the Lord and praising the Lord.

In Paul's letter to the Romans we hear of rejoicing, even in the face of great challenge:-

Romans 5:3-5 - ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Are we marked by our joyfulness? Do our lives speak of joy when others meet us? As Christians we are called to rejoice in all that God has done for us.

Proclaim

The “Good News” of Jesus is always something that is meant to be shared. The definition of “News” is of course the reporting of an event or information not previously known.

In today’s Gospel reading we hear how Jesus initially sent out his twelve closest disciples whilst he was still alive. This event is of course a precursor to the great commission we heard in last week’s gospel where we heard Jesus’ final instruction to his followers to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:16-20). And so we see that God intends for followers of Jesus to share the Great Story of God’s Kingdom, and the way to a relationship with God, with the whole world.

If it is Good news, we should want to tell others. Why wouldn’t we? We received four bottles of Hand Sanitizer from Moreton Distillery for free recently and I told a heap of people. Whilst this was “Good News” it is inconsequential in terms of spending eternity with God, or being cut off from God forever.

But the reality is that we do at times find it difficult to share the Good news of Jesus with others. Sometimes it is because we are afraid of rejection, sometimes we just don’t know how to do it. I recall visiting a cousin in hospital once, and although I had known him when we were young, I hadn’t really had any contact with him for the past 30 years. We did pray together, but I struggled, as I was unsure of where he was at with God.

I believe though, that as we become clearer about what we believe, and as we live lives rejoicing in God’s goodness, then we will become better equipped to share the Good News of Jesus. The questions in the leaflet we have in church - “My Christian Story” help us to articulate how we have come to believe. And proclaiming the Gospel will often be more about what we do than what we say. As St Francis of Assisi has been quoted, “Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

Proclaiming the Good News of Jesus is a challenge that will always be before us. As Jesus put it in Matthew’s gospel reading today “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Conclusion

It is a logical step to believe in the God we find shared with us in the Bible. Christianity has continued through the ages because people have come to believe. This belief is not just for what lies into the future but to give us meaning and purpose for our lives here and now.

Believing in a God who loves us and will not see us lost, should give us Joy. We are called to be a people who rejoice.

As we believe and rejoice, we should be drawn deeper into the Love of God and in turn this should lead us to share and proclaim the God News of God in Jesus. Amen.