

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost
25-10-2020
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Deuteronomy 34: 1-12 The Death of Moses

Psalms 90: 1-6, 13-17 God is Creator and controller of all
Show favour on those who fear you.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-13 Paul's work in bringing them the Gospel

Matthew 22: 34-46 The Greatest Commandment
Is the Messiah David's Son

Introduction

In view of our Bible readings today, I want to suggest that:-

- Our view of God is too small
- Our view of ourselves is too big
- We need to correct the imbalance

Our view of God is too small

God is Big. Bigger than we can imagine. As human beings we use all sorts of human descriptions to try and speak of God. I think it is natural for us to want to be able to explain God in human ways, but by very definition God is beyond our complete comprehension. So I want to suggest that we need to increase our view of God.

The Psalmist today, in Psalm 90 verses 2,3,4 says this:-

- ² Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- ³ You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."
- ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.

I wonder how often we consider the enormity of God.

For many people, God might be just someone to turn to in a crisis, like some sort of cosmic ambulance service. For others God might be viewed as a big spoil sport who makes rules to stop us from having fun.

God is not just some supernatural power out there, but rather, the God we find in the Bible is the God who created all that we can see. (and all that we can't see) And this God also created us as human beings to live in relationship with God.

God wants our attention, but God doesn't force us.

As Christians we believe, that despite the overwhelming power and dominion of God, God chose to be made known to us as human beings, by coming in the form of a human being – Jesus. If we think about the enormity of God, it can be hard to get our head around, but this is what Jesus claimed for himself, and this is what his first followers believed.

In the second part of the Gospel Reading today (Matt 22:41-46) where Jesus talks to the Pharisee's about the Messiah, he is clearly trying to let them know that he considers himself much more than just a prophet. He asks them about David's Son. Now David was the Jewish people's historically great King. He slew Goliath, he kept the Philistines at bay. Even though David did many bad things he always repented and turned back to God. Jesus is saying that if the Great King David calls the Messiah "Lord", then the Messiah can't just be one of David's physical descendants. Jesus is letting the Pharisee's know he's much more than a descendant of David. Jesus is letting them know that the way to God is through Him.

And we see in the resurrection of Jesus, how God has control over the whole of creation.

We need to acknowledge the greatness of our Creator, and what he has done for us in Jesus, and that through the Holy Spirit he lives in those who follow Jesus now.

We make ourselves too Big

The fact that we as human beings tend to think too highly of ourselves is an age old human problem. In western culture, because of the historical influence of Christianity, humility is still a virtue that we prize, yet it is also something that I think we find elusive.

Even if we don't think we do, we often want to put ourselves first. As babies we cry to get attention when we don't get what we want. As adults we can become worse, and become quite manipulative to get what we want.

Our consumer driven society does its best to convince us that this is the best way to live – We are constantly bombarded with messages to look after number one.

But what do we hear Jesus tell us in the Gospel reading today. When asked what is the greatest of all the commandments how does Jesus respond:-

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment."

(And in Mark's gospel it also says "with all your strength")

Jesus says that the best way to live is to put God first in our lives. This seems counter intuitive, but even Australian Social Researcher Hugh Mackay, has commented that if we focus too much on ourselves, it can adversely affect us:-

“if we focus too much on our own wants, our own entitlements and our own gratifications, with little regard for the needs and wellbeing of others, there will be an inevitable threat to our mental health.”

So Jesus tells us that we are to put God first.

In the Christian rite of initiation, that is Baptism, we are asked,

“Do you repent of your sins?”

The Greek word for repent, used in the New Testament is *Metanoia*. It doesn't mean merely to say sorry, but rather means a change of mind or heart, or a change of direction. So we are called as Christians to orient our lives not toward ourselves, but to orient our lives toward God. It isn't that we shouldn't love ourselves or our families, it's that we should love God first.

We need to be mindful of our Humanity and our need for God.

Correcting the Imbalance

So how do we go about correcting the imbalance?

It's as Simple and as Hard, as loving God first in our lives. Jesus said to love God with all of our Heart, and Soul, and Mind. This doesn't leave much wiggle room.

But to be able to do this I think we first need to understand why. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we are provided by God with a way to be assured of our relationship with God. Once we understand this assurance, then I believe we will really want to love God.

And if we really love God our attitude will be different.

Has any one ever seen a plaque in a Church with the letters - A.M.D.G.
They are the latin initials for “*Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*”, which in English translates to “To the greater Glory of God”.

We are called to live our lives, “To the greater Glory of God”.

This is something that gives us the ultimate reward, but it is also something we need to work at throughout our lives. Loving God has to be integral to our lives. God is to be the first thing we think about in the morning, and the last thing we think about at night.

Conclusion

“God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in Him.” The point of our lives is to glorify God. We need to work out how we can be most satisfied in God. – How we can love God the best. If we love God the best we can, and are most delighted in God, that's when God will be truly Glorified.