

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost
15-11-2020
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Judges 4:1-10 Deborah calls Barak to lead the fight against the Canaanites

Psalms 123 Look to God for Mercy

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11 You are sons of the light, not Darkness
Support one another

Matthew 25: 14-30 Jesus tells the parable of the Loaned money (Talents).

Introduction

Today I would like us to explore three themes from the Bible readings.

Firstly, we all have God given gifts, abilities and resources and God expects us to use them for the building up of God's Kingdom.

Secondly, judgement will come to us all.

And thirdly, we are called to support and encourage one another.

Talents

So let us firstly explore the fact that we all have gifts abilities and resources, and that God expects us to use them.

We hear in the parable, that a talent, is actually a large sum of money. The Master gives the money to his slaves according to their abilities. Such is the power of the use of this parable that when we hear the word talent now, we think of skills and abilities.

It is clear from the parable that we are not all the same. Jesus makes a distinction in the Parable. One slave received 5 talents, one 2 talents and the other only 1 talent. Like wise we are all different. We all have different skills and abilities, however we are all called to use these skills and abilities to build up God's Kingdom and to bring Glory to God. It is clear from the parable that just because we may not be as well endowed as others does not mean that we are relieved of responsibility.

One of the big challenges that often faces us as a church is that we often try to get people to do the jobs we think we need to do as a church, rather than deeply discerning the skills of each one of us and then seeing how these skills can be used.

One of the areas I believe we can improve on, is discerning who we are as God's people and what we have to offer. Once we do this it is not a matter of

then forcing ourselves on one another, but rather seeing how we can use our skills and abilities to grow the Church.

Knowing our own gifts is important, but using them in tune with those around us is even more important.

I encourage you to pray for discernment so that you might better understand the resources you have available, so that you will be enabled to continue to build up our church here at St Cuthberts.

Judgement

Knowing that there will be a time of Judgement is made quite clear to us in the bible, but I don't think it is something that we consider seriously enough.

Over the years in ministry, I have conducted hundred's of funerals. Many have been for people who I know have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and have lived lives committed to the building up of the body of Christ, but I have also officiated at many more for people who have had little to no connection to the Church. In all of these funerals I have never heard anyone say to me I think this person shouldn't be going to heaven. And yet in the parable today we are clearly warned that this is a distinct possibility for all of us.

At the end of the parable we hear these words:-

²⁸ So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹ For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰ As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

This doesn't sound like the gentle Jesus meek and mild, we learn to pray to as children. Not that Jesus isn't gentle, or meek or mild, but that Jesus does call us seriously to follow him in our lives.

The one who had the talent taken off him, didn't have it taken because he only had a lesser amount. He had it taken off him because he refused to use the talent given to him, to serve his master.

Now we know as Christians that Salvation comes not from what we do, but by accepting what Jesus did for us on the Cross. We are saved by accepting that on the cross, Jesus took away our sin, and in this we are free to live in a right relationship with God. However accepting this is not the end of the matter, it is just the beginning. Once we accept Jesus we are called to follow him. So using the gifts, skills and resources that God has given to us is not what gets us into heaven. Rather it is evidence that we are already sharing in God's Kingdom here and now.

In our reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians today we hear these words:-

⁹ For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.

As we think about the parable Jesus told today, I recall the words of a previous Bishop:- "If the police arrested you today, and charged you with being a follower of Jesus, would they be able to find enough evidence in your life to convict you?"

Judgement is a reality we all must face. I encourage you to face it seriously, but also, because of the great hope we have in the resurrection, I encourage you to face it joyfully.

Encouragement

So we know we are called to use all the resources God has given to us, as we await the judgement when Jesus will come again. And as we live into this in our lives, we are called to encourage one another.

In our reading from Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians today we hear these words:-

¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

I'd like to use an example to help us understand what encouraging one another might look like, and I would like to use the current Rugby League State of Origin Series. Whether you like Rugby League or not, whether you support New South Wales or Queensland, I'm sure you will agree that the those who are interested are passionate about supporting their state.

The series is now at one game each and the game to decide who wins the series will be held next week. It's going to be held in Brisbane, so commentators are saying that Queensland have a "Home Ground Advantage". They will have more, and more vocal fans cheering and supporting and encouraging them at the Game.

As Christians, gathered here today, our team is St Cuthbert's. How are we cheering and supporting and encouraging one another?

Conclusion

We live with the knowledge that Jesus will come again, at a time we do not expect, and that we will be Judged. Let us support one another and let us build up one another, so that we might be encouraged more and more, to follow Jesus in our lives, and as we do this, may others see what a wonderful thing this is to do. Amen.