

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
31-01-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Deuteronomy 18:15-20	The Lord will raise up a prophet.
Psalms 111	Praise the Lord his works are great and merciful. So fear Him.
1 Corinthians 8: 1-13	Instructions on food offered to Idols
Mark 1: 21-28	Jesus teaches with Authority And brings an unclean spirit out of a man.

Introduction

Last week we looked at Repentance, and how that is the first step in our relationship with God. From today's readings I would like to look at the theme:-

“Are You in Tune with God?”

And I'd like us to explore three aspects of this:-

Firstly, Why?, Because we are designed to live with God's Authority

Secondly, How?, We are called into relationship with God through Jesus

And Thirdly, What For?, Jesus called Followers to build up the Body of Christ

1. Why – God created us to live God's way

So firstly, why do we need to be in tune with God? As Christians we believe that God is the creator. At the beginning of the bible in Genesis we hear how God created all that there is. In this we believe that God created us to live in relationship with Him.

We hear in the reading from Deuteronomy, how God will send a prophet, and we are to listen and to obey.

In Psalm 111 verses 7 and 8 we hear:-

⁷ The works of his hands are faithful and just: and all his commandments are sure; ⁸ They stand firm for ever and ever: they are done in faithfulness and in truth.

In this we hear how God is providing for us a way to live that will be good for us.

And then in verse 10 we hear:-

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and of good understanding are those who keep his commandments: his praise shall endure forever.

Over the years I've met with people who are quite challenged by these words. I recall one person once said to me, "This doesn't seem right, why should we fear God, isn't God the God of Love?" My reply was, "Yes God is the God of Love, but God is also the God of all creation, so it is good to fear the consequences of ignoring our whole purpose for being created. We should fear the consequences of ignoring God's Authority. But the interesting thing is, that when we do fear God, we come to realise that there is nothing else we need to fear. If we fear God, then in fact, all fear is actually eliminated, because God is ultimately trustworthy.

In 1 John 4:18 we are told, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."

We are called to live in tune with God, because that is how God created us as human beings to live.

2. How – By accepting and following Jesus

As Christians we believe that the way we begin to be in tune with God, is by accepting what Jesus has done for us and seeking to follow him in our lives.

In the reading from Mark's Gospel today we hear:-

"They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority" The people were saying "What is this – a new teaching with authority." And Jesus showed his authority, not only by what he taught, but by what he did. In the authority he showed over the unclean spirit.

Baptism is the Christian Sacrament we use to show we want to accept and follow Jesus. In our prayer book the first question asked at the decision is, "Do you turn to Christ?"

So to begin being in tune with God we need to turn to Christ.

We need to accept all that Jesus has done for us, in his life to teach us how to live, in his death to assure us of forgiveness when we repent, and in his resurrection to assure us of hope no matter what challenges we face.

It is only when we fully submit our lives to Jesus, that we begin to be truly in tune with God.

3. What for – Kingdom of God – Jesus Called Followers

And what do we need to be in tune with God for? We need to accept God's authority, and be in tune with God so that we can build up the "Kingdom of God".

God gives us free will. It shows in our lives. We are called as Christians to build up the Body of Christ. We are called to build up one another. We are called to support one another.

What we are called to is more than "being good" or "keeping rules". In the reading from Paul's letter to the Corinthians today, we hear that rules about eating food show that eating or not eating is not important. It is what is in our hearts that is important, and how we help others in the faith that is important. We see in this reading that we have freedom, but in this freedom we also have responsibility.

Accepting God's Authority and seeking to follow Jesus should be an integral part of our lives. No doubt there will be highs and lows, there we will be ups and downs, but if we continue to follow Jesus we will grow closer to God and we will take our part in building up the Body of Christ.

We begin the journey of being in tune with God by accepting Jesus, and we continue the journey of being in tune with God by following Jesus. This journey is sometimes given the name "sanctification", whereby we continue to grow in the knowledge and love of God.

And we do this not only for ourselves, but for those around us. A previous Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple has been quoted as saying:-
"The Church exists primarily for the sake of those who are still outside it."

We are called to be in tune with God, so that we can join together to help those who do not know Jesus, to find out this Good News, and to follow Jesus for themselves.

Conclusion

Last week, we looked at repentance, and how in repenting we can be assured of forgiveness and be in a right relationship with God.

This week we have moved on from repentance to living in tune with God.

As we go out from our worship this week, I pray that we will seek afresh to acknowledge God's Authority over our lives. I pray that as we seek to be in tune with God we will be enabled to live as followers of Jesus, So that God's Kingdom will be increased here in this place. Amen.