

The Seventh Sunday of Easter
16-05-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26	Matthias chosen to replace Judas
Psalms 1	Life's two roads – Faithful or faithless
1 John 5:9-13	Only Faith in the Son of God brings Eternal Life
John 17: 6-19	Jesus prays for the disciples- That they may be one in the world and be protected from the evil one.

Introduction

As Christians we are called to be different! This might seem like an odd statement to make, but it fits well with what we have heard from the Bible readings today.

I think I came to this realization when I was a teenager. At 17 years of age I joined the Army Reserve, and had to have a psych interview. The psychologist asked me, "Was I normal? My reply was, "No, I was a Christian". This answer caused him to look at me a bit quizzically, but when I explained that most of the people who were my mates from school, didn't go to church, then he understood why I gave that response.

It is natural for us as human beings to want to fit in with those around us. Many of us may just want to blend in. As Christians though, we are called to be different, but in a good way. We have the Good News of Jesus to share with those who may not know it yet.

Message

So, the call for us to be different is about the life affirming Good News we have received in Jesus, and the fact that we are called to live it out and share it with others.

Let us look at how we see this in our readings today:-

Firstly, in the reading from the Acts of the Apostles we hear how they are acknowledging that they were to be witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. Then we hear how Judas is no longer with them, and they need to choose a replacement. And we hear how Matthias is chosen. Just because Judas had betrayed them and left them, it didn't stop those first followers of Jesus from

continuing on with the task that Jesus had left them with. They chose a replacement and kept sharing the Good News.

In the reading from the first Letter of John today we hear these words:-

¹¹And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13)

John wrote this letter to reassure Christians of their faith, and to counter false teachings that had arisen in the church. John makes it pretty clear that the way to eternal life is through Jesus. This is the message that continues to be reinforced throughout the New Testament. A message that is to be shared.

In the reading from John's Gospel today we hear these words from Jesus:-

¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world
(John 17:18)

From this we know that Jesus came into the world as the Good News for the world, and he has called those who would be his followers to do the same. As we sense God's overwhelming love for us, and decide to accept and follow Jesus, we must realize that he in turn sends us back out into the world to let others know how good it is.

Challenges

Now we know that we have a message of "Good News" to share, and sometimes we will see others receive it with gladness.

And we also know that in sharing this Message we may face challenges.

In John's gospel today we hear these words from Jesus:-

¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. (John 17:14)

In this we know that we are called to live in the world, but we are not to be of the world. This means we are called to live out our lives following the teachings of Jesus, and sharing with others, that it is only through Jesus that we can know the way to life in all its fullness, to life as it is meant to be.

At times this will put us at odds with those who do not know or want to follow Jesus. Jesus actually says that the world will "hate" those who want to follow

him. So, we must understand that even though following Jesus is the way to fully know how we are meant to live, it will not necessarily be easy. There will be challenges in store for all of us who decide to follow Jesus.

Security

Whatever challenges we face though, we need to know we will be secure in Jesus. Just as Jesus prayed for his first followers, he continues to pray for us. This is what we heard in John's gospel reading today:-

John 17:11 - Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

John 17:13 - ¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.

John 17:15 - ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.

So, we know that amid the challenges, if we seek to know and love God by accepting and following Jesus then we can know God's peace. It does not mean that we will be shielded from challenges, but rather that we will be given God's grace to get through them.

We also heard this from John's Gospel today:-

John 17:17 - ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

To sanctify is to make holy. We know that only God is Holy, but we are called to a life of growing in holiness, where we are continually placing all of our faith and hope and trust in Jesus, and as we do this we can know and feel secure in God's love.

Conclusion and Application

So, what would I like us take from the bible readings we have heard in our worship service today?

Firstly, to Know and Acknowledge we are called to be different as Christians.

Secondly, to Know that we have a message of "Good News" to share.

And finally, to Know that no matter what challenges we face, our lives are secure in Jesus. Amen.