

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 18)
01-08-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a Nathan rebukes David for his Adultery with Bathsheba, and how he had Uriah killed.

Psalms 51:1-12 David's plea for mercy, forgiveness and cleansing.

Ephesians 4:1-16 Unity in the body of Christ.

John 6: 24-35 Jesus declares himself to be the Bread of Life.

Introduction

In our sermon today I would like us to focus on the sentence of Scripture:-

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”
Isaiah 55.2

In this scripture we are given a metaphorical image for what our lives can be. I would like to explore today's bible readings, which continue on from the readings we had last week, as we cover some of the similar issues, from the forgiveness David received, to Jesus declaring himself to be “the bread of life”.

Our Need for Forgiveness

As human beings we need God's forgiveness. I believe there are often two traps we can fall into here.

The first trap which I have seen, is that some people think they can't be forgiven. They think what they have done is so bad that they don't believe God would even want to forgive them. They certainly wouldn't expect the person they have hurt to forgive them. This belief flies in the face of everything Jesus said. Jesus tells us he came for the whole world.

The second, and I think more common trap we can fall into, is that we don't think we need forgiveness. Most of us are not in jail, we try to live pretty good lives, so why would we need to be forgiven.

As human beings we need to look realistically at ourselves. We need forgiveness from sin. But sin is such a terribly misunderstood word. When we

hear the word sin, there are all sorts of connotations, however sin is simply doing things our way, and not God's way. And this is normal for all of us at one time or another

There are of course sins of commission, things we do that are not right, and sins of omission, things which we could have or should have done, but we didn't. Sometimes we are acutely aware of our need for forgiveness, and other times we believe we're "all good." If we're honest with ourselves though, none of us are perfect and we all need God's forgiveness throughout our lives.

The Way to Forgiveness

The way to forgiveness is first to acknowledge what we need God's forgiveness, and second is to repent, and there may then be a need for restitution.

In the reading from 2 Samuel today after Nathan makes David fully aware of what he has done, David acknowledges his sin and declares, "I have sinned against the Lord". It's interesting to note that David says he has sinned against God. It's not that he hasn't sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, of course he has sinned against them, but primarily he has sinned against God, by doing what he wanted and not what God wanted.

And once we acknowledge what we have done wrong we need to repent. Repentance is more than just saying sorry and then continuing on our way. It is about seeking to turn our lives around to be reorientated to God. In our psalm today we hear these words of what repentance is all about:-

"Create in me a clean heart, O God: and renew a right spirit within me."

And sometimes restitution may be possible and appropriate. If you recall the story of Zacchaeus the Tax Collector, he promised to repay four times the amount he had defrauded anyone.

Jesus the Bread of Life

To have received God's forgiveness through Jesus, is to have come into a new relationship with God. And it is through this relationship with God that our lives are able to flourish.

We live in a society that doesn't look at the world like this though. Here in Australia, we live in what is commonly called Western Society. Christianity has been a very influential part of how our society was formed, and because of this many people in our society who are not Christian seek to behave in line with Christian values and live exceedingly good lives.

However, I believe there is something very important in knowing God through Jesus which draws us beyond ourselves, to give our lives meaning and purpose.

Our Western society began to change during the time known as the Enlightenment of the 18th century, and is becoming more and more influenced by a way of thought known as Secular Humanism. In this there is no sense of God, but rather Humanity as the highest order, and Happiness is our highest aspiration. There is a belief that humanity is evolving, and if we all seek to live by obeying the rules, that is, doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, then all will be fine.

When we look at the world around us though, it doesn't seem to work like this at all. The two world wars the 20th Century, the constant wars in many parts of the world and the current geopolitical tensions between China and many western countries, all remind us that the world is a beautiful, yet broken place.

I believe that to live in such a broken world, we need to have a meaning and a purpose which comes from beyond just ourselves.

In chapter 14 of John's Gospel Jesus says these words,

"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the father except through me."

And in today's gospel reading Jesus says,

"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

I don't believe we will ever find true happiness in just trying to keep rules or do the right thing. Especially in our post modern world where "the right thing" really depends on who you ask at the time.

I believe we will find true happiness in Jesus. In today's Gospel we also hear Jesus say,

'This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.'

Jesus, doesn't say that to be in a right relationship with God we first need to do "this" or "that", but rather we first need to repent and to accept Jesus into our lives. And when we do accept Jesus and experience the love and forgiveness of God, then we will be drawn to want to follow Jesus. It doesn't mean we will become perfect, but we should be growing closer and closer to God in our lives.

As we consider the metaphor of food for our lives, we see that Jesus is the bread that really satisfies.

Conclusion

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.”

Jesus is the one who will really satisfy us. True happiness does not come from seeking after just what we want, but by seeking after what God is calling us into, in Jesus.

When Jesus was asked what is the most important thing to do in life, he responded with the Two Great Commandments:

²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

I believe it is only when we love God first, then we will truly understand that we are loved, and we will be enabled to love our neighbours as ourselves.

And I believe that it is only in this, we will find true meaning and purpose, and be satisfied. Amen.