

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 14)
04-07-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

2 Samuel 5: 1-5, 9-10 David anointed King over Israel

Psalms 48 The Glory and Strength of Zion

2 Corinthians 12: 2-10 Paul excludes boasting and talks of his Thorn
if we are in Christ, when we are Weak we are Strong

Mark 6: 1-13 Jesus says - a Prophet is not accepted in his own town
Jesus sends out the Twelve

Introduction

Today I'd like us to look at the two readings we have had from the New Testament and what they tell us about our relationship with God through Jesus, and how we might respond and live into this relationship.

Let us look first at the reading from Mark's Gospel, and how we are called to respond to Jesus, in the way we live our lives.

And then I would like us to look at the reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, and the anomaly of how power is made perfect in weakness.

Mark - Response to Jesus

Our Gospel reading today has 2 parts and the first is about Jesus returning to his home town. We hear Jesus respond to their surprise at his teaching with these words:-

"Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

As we look at the reading I'd like to begin with a story:-

A traveling circus was staying on the outskirts of a village. One evening, shortly before show time, a fire broke out in one of the tents. The manager sent the clown, who was already dressed up for his act, into the nearby village for help. There was a danger that the fire would spread across the fields of dry stubble and burn the village itself.

The clown ran into the village. He asked the people to come out as quickly as possible to help to quench the fire. But the people didn't take him seriously.

They thought it was a brilliant piece of advertising on the part of the management. He tried his best to make them understand that there really was a fire. But the harder he tried the more they laughed at him. Finally, the fire reached the village and burned it to the ground.

The main reason why the villagers didn't listen to the man was that they looked upon him as a clown. This made it virtually impossible for them to examine the truth of what he was saying to them.

This story is similar to what happened to Jesus. In his hometown the people thought they knew him. Their familiarity, didn't allow them to hear his message.

This can also happen to us today. Christianity has been around for 2000 years and sometimes people think they know all about it, when really, they don't.

And sometimes we don't like to be told what's good for us. Especially by those we know. If Leeza says something critical of me, I'm very quick with a response to defend myself, rather than listening to what she has to say, and what truth there may be in it. Sometimes we need to have the courage to share what may be difficult for others to hear, because it is true. And sometimes we need to have the courage to listen to things we may not like, and to discern the truth.

All this is not necessarily easy. For Jesus, continuing to tell the truth, led to his death on the cross.

We need to have open hearts and minds. Firstly, to accept Jesus, and then to discern what Jesus is calling us into.

The second part of the Gospel reading is about Jesus sending out the Twelve, and he gives his disciples these instructions:-

“Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”

Here Jesus is warning his disciples that although they have “Good News”, there will be people who are not open to hearing it. They needed to know how to deal with this so that they would not be held up, or disheartened, in their mission to tell others about Jesus.

We too, need to not be disheartened, if those around us reject Jesus, so that we too can be enabled to continue to follow Jesus in the face of rejection.

2 Corinthians - God's Grace – Power in Weakness

As we read the bible and come to the Good News of Jesus Christ, it is, in one sense, a very easy and wonderful thing to know that God loves us, and as we repent, we can be assured of God's forgiveness and of God's Love. However, as we live into our faith in Jesus, we often need to hold things together in tension.

Just as Jesus warned his disciples that they would at times face rejection, we also hear it in the reading from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians today. We hear how despite the fact that Paul is facing many challenges, and has a physical affliction that will not leave him, he is still content. These are the words that Paul ascribes to God:-

"My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness."

These can be Hard words for us to hear. Sometimes we suffer things that are not pleasant. Paul lists weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities he has suffered for the sake of Christ.

We, like Paul, are called to put all of our trust in God, and seek to serve God, no matter the consequences, and no matter the situation in which we find ourselves.

If we accept Jesus as Lord, we must hand our power to him. It's only when we know he is in control that we can understand how we can have power in weakness.

This, I believe, has been described as, "The peace of God, which passes all understanding", and it can give us real peace in our lives, despite the struggles we face.

Conclusion

Today we've looked at the two new testament readings.

In Mark's Gospel we've been challenged about hearing God's will for our lives, and being open to accepting and following Jesus.

In Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians we've been challenged to think about power in life and fully submitting ourselves to the will of God, so that no matter the circumstance we can know God's peace.

As we go out from worship today, may we continue to be challenged and encouraged by the words of St Paul:-

" Whenever I am weak, then I am strong."