

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 17)
25-07-2021
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- 2 Samuel 11:1-15 David commits adultery with Bathsheba, then tries to cover it up.
- Psalm 14 Only the fool denies God.
- Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul prays the Ephesians will know and be filled with the love of Christ, through the Spirit.
- John 6: 1-21 Jesus feeds 5000, Jesus walks on Water.

Introduction

“God is more generous to us than we can even begin to imagine.”
If you take nothing else away from today's worship, I hope that you will be able to remember these words and embrace them.

Today I would like us to contemplate God's generosity to us, but before we do that, I want to look at why we need God's generosity.

Fallen Humanity

We need God's generosity because we are fallen and fallible human beings. At the beginning of the Bible, we hear the story of Creation, of Adam and Eve, and then the story of the Fall. It tells the story of how we as humans, can be self centred and not God centred, and how this cuts us off from God.

Today, in the Old Testament reading from the second book of Samuel, we hear another story of our fallen Humanity, in King David's horrific behaviour. We hear how he is an adulterer and then a murderer. This is not the behaviour you would expect from God's chosen and anointed king.

The story reminds us, that as human beings, we have a propensity for wanting things “our way”, and not necessarily “God's Way”.

If this can be true for David, it is also certainly true for us. We may not have done the horrific things David was guilty of, but we are all guilty, at times of doing things the way we want, as opposed to what might be best in God's eyes.

In Psalm 14 today we hear these words:-

² The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of Adam: to see if there were any who would act wisely and seek after God.

³ But they have all turned out of the way, they have all alike become corrupt: there is none that does good, no not one.

What sobering words these are. Even though we, as human beings, are the pinnacle of God's creation, made in the image of God, we are also cut off from God, because at times we choose our own way and not God's way.

However, later in 2 Samuel we hear how David is given an example to point out to him the wickedness of what he has done. David realizes the error of his ways and he repents. The stunning thing as this story unfolds, is that because David is truly repentant, he is forgiven by God.

God is more Generous than we can even begin to imagine

The climax of God's generosity, is that although we are rebellious human beings, rightly cut off from God because of our own actions, God wants to forgive us and bring us back into a good relationship with God.

Throughout the Old Testament we hear of God's chosen people, the Israelites, and how they come to God, and then how they reject God and suffer the consequences. But through the generations we hear how God seeks to bring them back.

Then in the New Testament, we hear how God does a new thing. Through Jesus, a descendant of David, God is drawing all of humanity back to God.

In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus we can be assured of God's forgiveness and love for us. There is nothing we can do to earn this forgiveness, it is a free gift from God, but we can't receive it unless we repent to accept it.

That is why the first words of Jesus in Mark's Gospel are:-

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

In the reading from Paul's letter to Ephesians today we hear how Paul is praying for them:-

¹⁸ I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

God's love for us in Jesus surpasses all that we can really know. Paul was praying that the Ephesians would be able to grasp something of the enormity of how much God loves us.

And in our reading from John's gospel today, we are given a very physical reminder of God's generosity. We hear how the people are seeking Jesus out because of the healing miracles Jesus had performed. Then we hear how he feeds a crowd of 5000 with only two fish and five barley loaves.

As we hear Bible stories, I'm sure we often think we've heard them before, we know these stories of Jesus, but imagine if you were actually there. Imagine what it might be like to see such a small amount of food continue to multiply. Thousands of people sitting down and eating. Imagining how confused and how amazed the first followers of Jesus must have been.

It's no wonder that Jesus created a stir with the Jewish authorities. It's no wonder that people flocked to see Jesus.

But Jesus was offering something more than just the physical. As amazing as the physical miracles were, and how they sometimes still can be today, Jesus is offering us something much more than just the physical.

These miracles of Jesus give us a foretaste of what we can expect in eternity with God. God's generosity to us is more than we can even imagine.

Living into God's Generosity

In Jesus we are given the way to God. This fills us with hope, but it does not stop the challenges we face in this world. The more we live into our faith in Jesus, the more we will be reassured of God's love and forgiveness, and be enabled to face the challenges of life in this world.

That is why Paul says these words to the Ephesians:-

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. ¹⁶ I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, ¹⁷ and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

It is through Jesus that we are reconciled to God, and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are encouraged and strengthened in our faith.

In John's gospel today when the disciples are afraid of the storm and of Jesus walking towards them on the water, he says to them:-

'It is I; do not be afraid.'

Repentance assures us of forgiveness, but the more we know and love God, the more we will be enabled, not to be afraid, and to be strengthened for the challenges of life.

Conclusion

God is more Generous to us than we can even begin to imagine.

God's grace is sufficient to overcome our sin, and strengthen us in any doubts that we may face.

Sometimes we are made all to aware of our human failings and frailty.

But despite or human failings, we can know that in Jesus we are loved, in Jesus we can have Hope, and in Jesus we are freed from fear and assured of God's Peace. Amen.