

The Second Sunday after Epiphany  
16-01-2022  
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 62:1-5            The Lord is your God, God will rejoice over you.  
Psalm 36: 5-10            Gods love pours out over all creation  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11    Spiritual Gifts vary, but all believers have them.  
John 2: 1-11              Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding in Cana

Introduction

Today as we look at our readings from Scripture, I would like to look at two points that I believe lead from them:-

- God Loves us and wants the best for us.
- God intends for us to have lives of meaning and purpose.

God Loves us and want's the best for us

Let's begin with the first point. "God loves us and wants the best for us."

I have seen two wrong ways of looking at this.

Firstly, I've seen people who think that God couldn't love them that much. They either point to things that they have done wrong, or things that have happened to them, and say how could God possibly love me that much. I have heard people say things like, "You know I did something that's not good, so God wouldn't love me, or if God really loved me, he wouldn't have allowed this to happen or that to happen." These people end up not knowing God because they assumed God didn't love them.

Secondly, I've seen people think God loves them, and because God loves them, they don't have to think about it anymore, or worry about God anymore. These people end up not really knowing God, because they thought they were good enough in themselves, and didn't think they really needed God in the first place.

God loves us, and God wants us to be in a relationship with God. It may be a bit hard to get our head around with God, but let's think about it in terms of human relationships. How could we possibly know that someone loved us if we didn't even know them. Normally we would know someone loved us by

the way we related to them, or by the way we interacted with them, or by the way we knew them.

Our relationship with God is of course different to our relationship with other human beings, but I hope you can see where I'm coming from.

Knowing someone loves us, comes from a place of knowing them.

So, let's now look at our Bible readings.

In the first reading from the prophet Isaiah, we hear these words,

<sup>3</sup> You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God. <sup>4</sup> You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

We see here how God is promising through the prophet Isaiah to bring his people Israel back to him. Throughout the Old Testament, we hear how God's chosen people often rebelled against God and subsequently went into exile. In the second half of the book of Isaiah we hear how God is promising to restore the relationship with them. And we see how Isaiah uses the imagery of marriage to describe God's love for his people. When Isaiah says, "the Lord delights in you" it is being made very clear that God loves us.

The world we live in is a broken and fallen world, but that does not mean that God doesn't love us. Actually, the fact we are drawn to something better indicates we are being drawn to God.

In verse 9 of Psalm 36 today we hear,  
"For with you is the well of life, and in your light shall we see light."

If we are going to see how much God loves us, we need to look to God. Just like we know we are loved in our interactions with other human beings, we can know we are loved in our turning to God.

And God has given us the ultimate in coming to know God, by becoming a human being like us. That's what we celebrate at Christmas. The incarnation, when Jesus came into the world as a human being, so that we could know the way to God.

In today's Gospel reading we hear the story of the first miracle performed by Jesus. This story is only recorded in John's Gospel. Jesus goes to a local wedding in Cana of Galilee and ends up turning water into wine.

In terms of the miracles performed by Jesus, it's probably not really high on the list. No one is healed, no one's leprosy vanishes. No one's sight is restored. No raging storms are calmed, or people saved from hunger.

Jesus simply helps some ordinary people from becoming embarrassed. And I suppose that's what makes it special in letting us know about God's love for us. God even cares about the ordinary. Jesus took water and turned it into wine, and not just any old wine, but extraordinary wine.

God loves us more than we can even begin to imagine.

And if we allow God into our lives, God can make a wonderful transformation of our lives as well.

In fact, God wants to do the same with us. God wants to use us to do the work of God in the world today.

This brings us to the second point from our readings today.

God intends for us to have lives of meaning and purpose.

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We live in a world where people are continually searching for meaning and purpose. Most people probably wouldn't be able to articulate it very clearly, but in the Western, postmodern world in which we live, the search is often around the things we can get for ourselves. Sometimes this can be around physical things like accumulating wealth, or houses and cars. Sometimes it can be around experiences like visiting special places or eating at certain restaurants. Sometimes it is around our jobs and our human relationships.

None of these things in and of themselves are bad, but as human beings we are primarily created to live in a relationship with the God who created us and then with one another. The way one theologian put it, there's a God shaped hole in all of us and we are never completely satisfied unless we fill that hole with God in our lives. That's why when Jesus was asked what it the greatest commandment of all, he replied with, "Love God, and then, Love your neighbour as yourself."

In our reading from 1 Corinthians today we hear these words,

<sup>7</sup> To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

As human beings we are all different. In this letter, Paul lets us know that there are a lot of different gifts, and not everyone has them all. Paul also let's us know that no one has none. We all have gifts we can use, and we are called to use our gifts for the common good.

If we truly embraced God's love for us, then we will be drawn to God, and find our meaning and purpose not in ourselves, but in serving God. This is quite a counter-cultural outlook to have, but it is one where we as human beings will find true meaning and purpose for our lives.

Sometimes it is obvious to us what our gifts are, and sometimes we will be surprised by the things we are able to do with the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

The thing is though, that we need to be working at it. It's not something that just happens automatically.

There are many tools available to help us discern what our gifts might be. As we continue to work on our relationship with God, through prayer and scripture and worship, then we should be enabled to see more clearly what our gifts are.

And we shouldn't get disheartened if we're unsure of our gifts. The assurance is that we all have gifts, and God gives them to us for the good of one another. Sometimes we may need the help of others to discern our gifts.

And as we discern what our gifts are, and as we use our gifts, we should be using them not only to help ourselves, but to build up one another, as the Body of Christ here in this place.

It is when we are using our God given gifts to honour God and to help one another, that we will find true meaning and purpose in our lives.

### Conclusion

I hope you will be reminded today that God loves you. Nothing good you do will make God love you more, and nothing bad you do will make God love you less.

God created you, God loves you, and God wants your life to have meaning and purpose.

I pray that as you discern the gifts that God has given you through the power of the Holy Spirit, you will be enabled to use them, to build up all of those around you in your life, and to build up the Body of Christ here at St Cuthbert's - Tweed Heads. Amen.