

Third Sunday after Pentecost
26-06-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

2 Kings 2: 1-2, 6-14 Elijah taken to Heaven, Elisha succeeds him

Psalm 77: 1-2, 11-20 I cry out to you O God who saved Israel

Galatians 5: 1, 13-25 Stand firm in Freedom, Live by the gifts of the Spirit

Luke 9: 51-62 Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem.
Jesus tells his disciples they must decide if they
are to be his followers or not.

Introduction

As I was reflecting on the scripture readings set down for today, I was drawn to the theme of being on a journey.

I invite you to think of a time you went on a long journey somewhere. Not a trip just locally but maybe something larger like driving to Sydney, or going overseas.

Journeys have lots of different aspects to them. They may have ups and downs, highs and lows, but they all have beginnings and endings.

In many ways, the Christian faith, is a lot like being on a journey. In fact, the first Christians were known as “Followers of the Way”, where the way, of course, is Jesus.

Today, as we reflect on the bible readings, I would like to explore the theme of journey, and ponder the question, “At what stage are you at on your Christian Journey?”

Journey – Elijah and Elisha

Let us first look at the journeys of the older Prophet Elijah and the younger Prophet Elisha from today's reading from the Second Book of Kings.

Elijah had been faithful to God, and he knew he was coming the end of his life on earth. Elisha his protégé, had also been faithful, but was feeling called to continue the work that Elijah had been doing.

In today's reading we hear Elisha, doggedly following Elijah, not staying away, not waiting back, even when Elijah told him to. Elisha even asked for a

double share of Elijah's spirit, which may seem arrogant to us, but in terms of the language of the time he was merely seeking to follow in the work that Elijah was doing for God. And Elisha's wish was granted, because his desire didn't come out of seeking earthly gain or reward, but rather out of a seeking to serve God. Elisha didn't shrink back from following God, and was enabled in his life to continue Elijah's work.

Journey – Jesus on his way to Jerusalem

In today's reading from Luke's Gospel, we hear Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. Jesus knew he had a task to complete, and he was steadfast in achieving it. In another English translation of this text it says, "Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem".

Jesus is also telling those who would follow Him that they needed to be resolute. When Jesus says to the person who wanted to bury his father, "Let the dead bury their own dead", it would have been quite shocking. To give your parents a proper burial, was a significant and important responsibility which needed to be attended to for Jews in the customs of Jesus day. By saying this Jesus was trying to get across to those who would follow Him, that they needed to be sure of what they were getting themselves into.

To follow Jesus is an "all of life" encompassing journey. But it is the only way to really experience the best life that God has prepared for us.

Our Journey

Our own Christian Journey's may be very different. Some of us may have been nurtured in a family of faith since birth. Others may have come to know God much later in life. The beginning of the journey though, comes with the acknowledgement, that as mere human beings we are in need of forgiveness, to be reconciled to God, and it is Jesus that provides the way.

By accepting what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we begin the journey of following Jesus in our lives.

The Christian faith though, is not merely a moment of repentance and acceptance of God's grace for us. Rather it is a commitment to live into God's grace for us, throughout our lives.

And like other journeys, living out the Christian faith is rarely a straight line. There are usually ups and downs, highs and lows, but the important aspect is that we stay on the journey.

Like Jesus was, we are called to focus on God, and steadfastly follow.

Journey – A metaphor

I recall when Leeza and I first got together, I would go fishing quite a bit with her dad. We usually went to Crocodile Creek, also known as “Crocy”. This required a trip across the bay in Townsville. He always drove the boat at the same speed, flat out. If the weather was fine the journey was pleasant, but if it was rough, I would get quite wet and have a sore back from pounding into the waves. But when we got there the fishing was always good.

To me this is a bit of a metaphor for our lives as Christians. The experiences we have on the journey may be wonderful at times, and they might be challenging at times, but the destination is always worth being on the journey.

Being Guided on the Journey

As with other journeys we need to know the path to be on. There are many ways that God guides us as we seek to follow Jesus in our lives. Through the bible and prayer, through other Christians walking along side of us, and using our own common sense. In the reading from Paul’s letter to the Galatians today, he is encouraging them to stand firm in following Jesus. He points out that they are to be led by God’s Spirit, the Holy Spirit.

Paul points out that the law can be summed up by, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”, and within the text there are two lists of behaviours. One list of terrible things which may eventuate, if we abandon God and live life’s journey only by our own wants and desires, and another list, well known as the “Fruit of the Spirit” -

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control.

How we live our lives should be characterized more and more, by these things if we are journeying close to God and seeking to follow Jesus in our lives.

In life’s journey we should be growing closer and closer to God. The Christian life involves continually growing in our relationship with God.

Conclusion

We started today by asking the question:-

“At what stage are you at on your Christian Journey?”

You may be well along with a mature faith, you maybe just starting out, or you may be somewhere in the middle. The important thing to know is that you are on the journey. The journey will require great commitment. Be assured that the Holy Spirit is there to guide you, and that the destination will be better than anything you can imagine. Amen.