

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
14-08-2022
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Isaiah 5: 1-7 Israel compared to vineyard which produced wild Grapes

Psalms 80:1-2, 8-19 Israel again compared to a vineyard, and the psalmist pleads for it to be maintained

Hebrews 11:29-12:2 In faith let us look to Jesus and let us run the race before us.

Luke 12: 49-59 Conflict may result if you choose to follow Jesus
Reading the signs of the coming Kingdom

Introduction

This week, as we reflect on the readings from Scripture, I would like to look at the theme of "RESTORATION". You might be thinking, I heard a lot about division in the readings this morning, but bear with me, as we explore how God longs for us to be restored.

Isaiah

Let's begin with the first reading from the prophet Isaiah :-

¹Let me sing for my beloved my love-song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. ² He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. ³ And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. ⁴ What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?

God is being pretty clear about what he has done for Israel. If you think about the analogy of the vineyard, you hear about digging, clearing, planting, building hewing. The owner has done a lot for the vineyard, the owner really wants the vineyard to flourish. This story tells us how much God loved Israel, and how much God loves us. And yet, we also hear how wild grapes are produced. The vines, if you like, have free will, but the owner is desperate for them to produce good grapes.

God wants us to be restored to God, but God doesn't force us.

We need to be willing and open to be restored to God.

Psalm 80:19

Let's continue as we look at the final verse from Psalm 80 :-

*Restore us again, O Lord of hosts:
show us the light of your countenance,
and we shall be saved.*

We hear the psalmist is pleading for restoration. The psalmist has realised they have turned away from God. They have suffered because of it, and they need to repent and be restored.

Do we urgently seek God like we hear the Psalmist doing today?

Luke

And now let us explore a portion of scripture from Luke's gospel :-

⁵⁰I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!

In our Gospel Reading today Jesus says his coming will create division, but it's not because he wants division. I think he says it rather, because he knows some people will decide to reject Him. Jesus is coming for Restoration – he even says that he is under Stress leading up to God's ultimate act of Restoration – The death of Jesus on the cross, for us.

Because Jesus has died for us, in our place, we can be assured of the forgiveness of our sins and a restored relationship with God.
And the resurrection of Jesus assures us that the restoration is effective.

To be a Christian is different from being a good person. It is about being restored to God.

And in the example of heading to court in the gospel we hear from verse 58:-

on the way make an effort to settle the case

This example encourages us to be restored before it is too late. The example tells us that unless we are restored, we may end up without God and be eternally condemned.

Hebrews

But like in any relationship that has been restored. The restoration is not completed with nothing else left to do. If we are to live in a restored relationship with God, we need to work on the relationship. In the letter to the Hebrews today, we are reminded of the Saints of Old, and how their faith in God determined the way they lived.

For us “Restoration” is not just a word, but it must mean something in our lives. Restoration is to be seen in the way we live in relationship with God.

The writer to the Hebrews puts it like this:-

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

If we are restored to God, then the living of our lives clearly needs Jesus as the focus. Not ourselves, not our jobs, not even our families, but Jesus. No wonder Jesus predicted there would be division.

Conclusion

So where does all this leave us when we think about being restored to God in Jesus. Restoration, in the Christian sense, is about accepting what Jesus has done for us, so that we can live in a relationship with God.

God longs for us to be restored through Jesus.
And if we know we are restored, we are called to produce fruit.

The challenge for us today, if we are restored to God in Jesus, is to work out how this gives shape in our lives.

We need to work out how we put Jesus first, so that we will be enabled to produce God’s good fruit.

