

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany
12-02-2023
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- Deuteronomy 10:12-22 The essence of the Law is to Love God and follow God's ways
- Psalms 119:1-8 Happy are those who walk in God's ways
- 1 Corinthians 3: 1-9 Divisions in God's Church due to immaturity
- Matthew 5: 21-37 Jesus teaches on Anger, Adultery, Divorce, Oaths.

Introduction

I would like to begin today by posing some questions:-

- What is your deepest Desire?
- What do you Cherish?
- What gives your life meaning?

Readings

The readings today contain a lot about keeping God's Laws. God's Laws are of course, very important, but God provides these laws for us to live by, so that we might live our best lives, and live well with one another.

Laws are not an end in themselves, they are a tool by which we might live in peace and harmony with one another.

Today's readings take us to what is more importantly the essence of God's Laws. If you truly love God, you will want to follow God's ways.

God is the Creator

As Christians we believe we are created by God, and made to live in a relationship with God.

As one theologian put it, "There is a God shaped hole in all of us".

We need to find meaning for our lives. The place to find this meaning is in a relationship with God through Jesus, in what Jesus has done for us in his life, death and resurrection.

The ultimate in finding meaning, is in a relationship with God through Jesus. There are many other good and important things in our lives, but they will never be an adequate substitute for God.

As good as these other things may be, we will not find ultimate meaning in our relationships with other people, or in our jobs, or in the possessions we acquire, or even in Church.

These are all important, but ultimately we will only find real meaning in knowing we are loved by God, and loving God back.

If we do not love God first, no amount of keeping rules will ever satisfy us.

In Matthew 22:34-40 Jesus sums up God's Law, in the two great commandments:-

“Love God, Love your neighbour as yourself.”

It's not enough to try to just keep the law. It needs to be in our hearts. It needs to be our deepest desire. As another theologian has put it:-

“God is most glorified in us, when we are most satisfied in God.”

Practical Examples from New Testament Readings

So let us look now at a little of what we have heard from the Bible today and of how keeping God's laws are good for us.

In the reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians today we hear about divisions in the church and the immaturity with which some of the members of the Church are behaving. We hear of jealousy and quarrelling. It seems to me that the Corinthians were putting their individual desires first, and being less concerned about God or one another. It seems self evident, that we would want to live in peace and not conflict, but unless we seek to love God and love others, we are bound to love ourselves above all else, and never be able to find peace or a common purpose.

In the first portion of Matthew's Gospel today we hear Jesus' teaching on anger and reconciliation. Jesus is looking in depth at what lies behind the sixth commandment, “You shall not murder”. Where does murder come from? It generally comes from being angry at someone else. Jesus is encouraging his listeners to do whatever they can to be reconciled with one another. Now of course there will be times when we may not be able to reconcile, because we can only control our own behaviour, we can't control the behaviour of others. But are we seeking reconciliation? As I look around the world with

social media and the way people will only seem to get fed the information that they agree with. It appears we are more likely to want to set ourselves apart by what we want or agree with, rather than to seek reconciliation with others.

Rather than push us apart and be at enmity with one another, God's laws are there to help us live in peace with one another.

Conclusion

It is often hard to live by God's laws because we are all sinful human beings. But God loves us, and wants the best for us, that's why we are given God's laws to guide us. The reality is that at times we will all fall short in our lives. That's what sin is. But the Christian assurance is that when we repent, we receive God's forgiveness and are enabled to continue on seeking to love God in our lives.

What is your deepest Desire?

What do you Cherish?

What gives your life meaning?

If the number one thing in our lives is to love God, and we seek to do that, then we will be enabled to live by God's laws, and God will help us to do the things, God has planned for our lives.

It isn't of course easy, nothing of great value ever is, but if we love God and seek to live God's way, then I believe we will find fulfilment, hope and an inner peace in our lives that we are not able to find anywhere else. Amen.