

Reflection - The Second Sunday of Easter
07-04-2024
St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

- Acts 4: 32-37 The believers share their possessions
- Psalm 133 The joy of harmonious relationships
- 1 John 1:1 – 2:2 Jesus is the word of life
We should walk in his light and try not to sin
But in falling, we know we have forgiveness in Jesus
- John 20: 19-31 Jesus appears behind locked doors
Thomas' story of doubt followed by belief

Introduction

This morning I'd like to focus in on the sentence for today:-
"Peace be with you", says the Lord. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

Today as we look at what it means for us to be sent. I'd like us to look into what it means for us to be a member of the church.

Grace

In the first reading this morning we heard from the Acts of the Apostles. We heard how the first Christians responded to what it meant to be followers of Jesus. We hear how they shared everything, we hear how they continued to sell off possessions so that no one would be in need. This appears to be a very communal form of living. In many ways, I don't think we could be much further from that, in the way we live in society today, and yet we continue to come together as followers of Jesus.

We are in a very different time and place than those first disciples were, so the society in which we live is different, and yet we are still followers of Jesus. I'd like to look more at what seems to be the result of the way they lived? And I think it's summed up in verse 33:-

"With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all."

And great grace was upon them all.

It doesn't say great grace was upon some of them. And it doesn't say that each of them had varying degrees of grace.

It says - great grace was upon them all. Each and every one of them.

So just as it did then, being a part of God's church today means we should be filled with the knowledge and power of God's grace. We should live our lives

as part of a faith community because we are conscious of what God has done for us through Jesus. We should be ever aware of God's grace to us. As the reading from the first letter of John today states – We are to be the ones who walk in the light. We are to be filled with Great Grace.

Joy

And how should being filled with great grace make us feel?

In the Gospel reading the disciples were overjoyed when they saw Jesus. To know of his risen presence gave them much Joy.

In the reading we heard from John's letter, he says "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete."

To know the risen Jesus is to be filled with Joy. Now this doesn't mean we won't experience other emotions in our lives. Of course, we will experience all kinds of emotions from ecstasy and happiness to loneliness to anger and to sadness and grief. Jesus himself experienced many emotions as a human being, but because of our faith as followers of Jesus, we should and can be assured of an underlying joy in the knowledge of what he has done for us and the hope that we have in God because of him.

When others see us as Christians there should be an underlying joy that permeates who we are.

Communion

Let's look now at how as ones being sent, we are called to be in communion. It was unthinkable for these first believers that they would have somehow had private faiths. The Jewish faith from which Jesus emerged had a national identity, and the faith of these first Christians existed only as that of a shared community. They weren't each individual Christians, but rather only Christians because of the faith community to which they belonged. In fact, much of the New Testament is focused on issues of living together as faith communities. St Paul and others write to many of these communities with the specific intentions of both encouragement and correction for living as faith communities. As Christians we are called to live in community. The famous English clergyman and poet John Donne, once wrote "No man is an Island unto himself." We cannot exist as Christians in isolation. Unless we are in fellowship with other Christians we cannot function as we are truly meant to.

Love on Another

So, what might it mean for us to be part of a Faith Community, as opposed to say maybe the local gym, or Bowling Club, or Lions Club.

As a Christian community we should stand out as different because we love one another. It's not in our readings for today, but in John's Gospel 13:34,35

Jesus says “³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Loving all of those around us, is an easy thing to say, but not necessarily an easy thing to do.

Sure, it's easy for us to love others we like, but what about those in the church who we don't particularly like?

What about those who haven't necessarily been nice to us?

I've seen it in other churches, I see it in this church, and I see it in myself. Sometimes we find it easier to ignore or dismiss or even treat badly those whom we don't necessarily like ourselves.

However, as followers of Jesus, as ones sent by him, we are called to love one another.

Now this doesn't mean that we are called to be door mats, so that others can wipe their feet on us. And it doesn't mean that we should always submit ourselves to the unrealistic expectations of others. But it does mean that we should make every effort to be reconciled with our fellow Christians. And it does mean that we need to be prepared to forgive when the situation arises. For me an issue of reconciliation and forgiveness was one of the most difficult issues that I have had to struggle with, in my faith journey.

The need for reconciliation and conflict resolution is at the heart of our sinful and selfish nature.

But, if we are to be seen as followers of Jesus, then more than anything else, - we need to be, -and we need to be seen as, a faith community that loves and respects it's members.

The psalm today speaks of how lovely it is when families live together in unity. I'm not sure how well the picture of oil pouring over someone's head, beard and collar conveys this for us, but it certainly did for the psalmist. We need to see it as a priority for us to live as a family that lives in unity.

Conclusion

Today we've looked a little into what it means for us to be followers of the Risen Jesus.

We should be filled with God's Grace, we should feel his Joy, and we should be part of a communion that loves one another.

We come together today, to worship as members of the faith community known as The Tweed Heads Anglican Parish at St Cuthbert's Anglican Church. My prayer is that just as St Cuthbert was known as a wonderful encourager of others, we too here at St Cuthbert's will encourage each other. I pray that we will support one another and seek as far as we are humanly able, to be as one, in heart and mind. And I pray that through the example

that we show to others of how we love each other, others may be drawn to us and seek also to become followers of Jesus.

As we stand today and affirm that we are the body of Christ and his Spirit is with us, may we be as one united body, just as Jesus prayed that we might. And as we say peace be with you to those around us, may we seek to be at real peace, even if there are some with whom we do not feel peace.

I'd like to finish with some of the words Jesus spoke to his first disciples.

They are just as important for us, right now, as they were for them:-

Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

Amen.