

Lyn Valley Mission Community

Trinity 2

Ezekiel 17:22-24

Psalm 92:1-8

2 Corinthians 5:6-17

Mark 4:26-34

In speaking and listening, writing and reading, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Today I want to start with words from the Collect for the day:

Lord, you have taught us

that all our doings without love are nothing worth:

send your Holy Spirit

and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,

the true bond of peace and of all virtues,

without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.

as a reminder of what we are about.

It is another way of saying "Love God and your neighbour as yourself" those golden words at the heart of our faith.

Loving is not easy and as the collect says, the radical love to which Jesus call us is only possible by grace – by the power of God at work in and through us. We cannot love fully in our own strength and it is a capacity that grows in us as we allow God to work in and through us.

I wonder how we can each track the growth in that capacity in ourselves. Think of yourself, and then add around you those you care about most, those you love most and think about how you show your love for them, what you feel about their wellbeing and anything you can do to enhance it. Perhaps a bit further beyond them there might be a wider group of people for whom you have concern and are keen to offer support to when able, and then out and out towards the wider world that you feel benevolent

towards, how does the way you live, show your love, Gods love for them?

And then, we each might honestly wonder, where does that desire for others' wellbeing, that extending love reach its limit, who is beyond it? How might the gift of the Holy Spirit help us reach those with love too?

Amongst Jesus' parables today he talks about the mustard seed which is the smallest seed, but once sown grows into the largest tree so that all the birds of the air can make nests in its shade. He says this is an image of the Kingdom of God: a place of extending hospitality grown from a tiny seed.

I wonder if we can fully imagine what such a place is like? A place where all feel welcomed and safe, all at home; a place where that is for all the birds of the air in their wide diversity, but each feels welcome because all are. I wonder if we have ever experienced feeling so at home ourselves, so welcomed? And how that feeling might shape our welcoming of others to a full share in the place, our excitement in seeking the company of others in such a place?

It is Jesus' image for the Kingdom of God.

That might mean we can hope for such a home coming in heaven, and surely we can.

But Jesus began his own teaching with an assurance that the Kingdom of God was also close at hand, a coming reality with his mission, of way of life he was calling his followers to share.

He is offering a way of life which is about the radical priorities of loving God and loving all the neighbours we have. St Paul in the epistle set for today says when anyone is in Christ there is a new creation – a new way of living with God's love at its heart: the life of the Holy Spirit outpouring through us the most excellent gift of love.

He is calling his friends to allow the seeds of his ministry, his life, death, resurrection and gift of the spirit, to grow in their lives the hospitable world of a tree with ever extending branches in which

all might find a home. Calling them to love which is the sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God.

As those gathered with this ideal, the "ecclesia" the church (the word means those gathered) has ways in which it can be a very clear sign of the Kingdom, but we often fall short of the radical love of our calling.

It is worth us each reflecting on how we have found our home here, how comfortable is our nest making? How does that shape the way we encourage others to join in? How does it renew the energy of our love to extend that outgoing love we reflected on at the beginning?

In the last years, as an institution the Church of England has had to face up to, seek forgiveness for and find ways of addressing for the future, a number of ways that it has failed badly in being a sign of God's radical love in valuing all God's people.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has highlighted historical failures in creating a safe environment within some church communities for those who were most vulnerable and the need now for a far deeper awareness of the ongoing impact of those failings in many lives.

The Archbishop's report From Lament to Action has accepted that processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination mean that the definition of "institutional racism" can be applied to the Church of England.

More positively, the Bishops have put huge resource into effectively creating a supported conversation across all levels of the church to help people understand one another within the contemporary social dynamics around identity, relationships, gender and sexuality. Living in Love and Faith is a national process to help us all learn to love in love and faith with one another, especially with those whose experience of life is different from our own.

These national initiatives are not about "the church out there". They remind us that each of us has our own journey of finding our

way to belong, finding our own nest; that each of us may have found glimpses of the Kingdom Jesus is drawing us into in our church life, but much that is not welcoming too; that together we are called to allow all our doings without love, to be transformed to worth by the out pouring of the Holy Spirit.

In coming weeks across the Mission Community I would like us to give time to learn from the national reports how we can respond with humility and deepen our love with practical action at a local level.

PCCs will be making their annual review of our safeguarding policy and making sure that all training is renewed to make sure we all have the best and most confident awareness of what makes a church a fully welcoming and safe community for any who might be vulnerable in our community.

If you are interested in understanding more about the experience of UKME members of the church in our own diocese I would guide you to an event this Sunday evening on Zoom:

Holy Ground: Becoming me with Rev'd Prebendary Deborah Parsons and Rev'd Tanya Hockley-Still - Sunday 13 June at 6pm on Zoom

"Becoming Me" is an opportunity to listen to and reflect on the stories of two female minority ethnic clergy and their identity in Christ, to consider why some stories get traction and others don't and to reflect on where we've exhibited or experienced bias in our own lives. [Join on Zoom at 6pm on Sunday](#). (go to the Roots and Shoots news letter on the diocesan Website for further information).

And over the next weeks, I will be completing the Living and Love and Faith Course with Chapter colleagues in order to reflect on how we as a Mission Community can best organise a way of using the material for group reflection.

In the meantime, let's each return to the image of the great tree, into which God is calling us home, with all God's people, all God's Creation. Let's ask God to help us deepen in our sense of

belonging in God's love that we are free to love wholeheartedly those who nest around us.

Lord, you have taught us

that all our doings without love are nothing worth:

send your Holy Spirit

and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,

the true bond of peace and of all virtues.

That we may be those who find and offer a home in you.

Amen