

Luke 11 1-13 (Gen 18. 20-32 & Col 2 6-15) St M & AA 8.30 & 10am 24/7/22



May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I had the pleasure of speaking to someone within the congregation last week, who had been to another church while away. It's good to know people attend church while away as it gives us opportunities to see how others 'do it' so to speak. It can give us ideas and refresh us, but it can also challenge us and make us glad to be back! In this case it was the latter! The minister where they had attended was a bit of a hell, fire and damnation preacher and left them feeling rather bemused as to why people would have a faith in a God who was being portrayed in such a way. It would be interesting to know the ministers take on today's readings with Sodom and Gomorrah! But each to their own, we all have to find a way to God, I personally find a faith built on a form of fear factor and judgment difficult to balance with a God I believe to be foremost of love. Not a soppy love but a love born of relationship, time, forgiveness, openness, justice and commitment.

Today's readings I believe gives us an insight to this covenantal loving relationship which is there for all of us and as such, surely it cannot be God's will for anyone to be lost, surely God longs for all of us to be saved. Yes Sodom and Gomorrah were dens of iniquity but we mustn't forget that each person there was still a part of God's loving creation and made in God's image. God's creation is known and loved and yet in every generation we will all know and experience people who have deliberately or through circumstance turned away from God and followed their own ways until they are so far from God they can no longer hear God's promptings or feel His presence, yet they are still all sons and daughters of God's own making.

Here we are reminded of the immense parental tenderness that God has for us. He has created each of us full of potential and like any good parent wants the best for us, for us to walk in His light and to be filled with His spirit. However in reality things are very often different, just as in any family there are times when we want our own way, but this desire of self often means we refuse the gifts God wants to give us, gifts necessary for our growth and deepening of relationship with Him.

In Genesis we can clearly see that there is a lovely close relationship between Abraham and God. Abraham is respectful and understands perfectly the justice of the threatened destruction, but because of Abrahams close relationship he also senses within God's love the terrible waste and sadness, and therefore pleads for mercy on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah.

I wonder how this made God feel! After all if God is a hell and damnation God interested only in vengeful justice surely Abrahams pleading could not only break that relationship but make God even more angry and vengeful. This is not the case, for what Abraham is doing, displays the qualities that God must have desired for all his creation, that of loving respect of God and love for all created in God's image.

In the section of Paul's letter to the Colossians, Paul is urging those reading to let their faith continue to grow and flourish in Christ so much so that their lives are to overflow with thankfulness. This is really important, when we first come to faith we can be so full of the spirit but over time that initial commitment, freshness and awareness of God's presence can fade and over time we can almost feel that we know God so what's new to learn, it's like any relationship if we are not careful it can loose it's intensity and become stale.

It is not the case that the intensity of God's closeness to us is more at the beginning of our relationship with Him, God is always close to us, more it is us who gradually fade away from him. Hence Paul urges us to remain close to God, by learning of God's word and presence through bible study, prayer, fellowship and sacrament, using these gifts to us to grow spiritually strong.

Then in Luke the disciples ask Jesus how to pray and we are given the words of the Lord's prayer and Luke links this with a whole passage on encouraging us to ask God for what we need and to be persistent with our requests. God gave us freedom and choice and therefore God will not force himself on anyone, he however waits, waits for us, it is for us to invite God into our lives, and why we should persist with what we ask for and keep knocking at the door in prayer.

When we have examples of Jesus healing people Jesus often asks them to be clear and state what they want as part of the healing process, as God wants to work with us. Rather than be seen as a takeover bid this is a relationship: God in relationship with his creation, a creation that despite everything God loves. When we pray the Lord's Prayer God desires, that we desire, that His kingdom comes, that we desire all our needs, both physical and spiritual to be met in him, and that we love and trust that in him our sins are forgiven leading us away from temptation, and as some would say and have us believe hell, fire and damnation. Therefore may we truly desire and respectfully repeatedly petition God as Abraham does for all of God's creation trusting that in our seeking of God and of His never-ending love for us individually and as humanity as a whole, we will be ready for the gifts He bestows and bear fruit to our fullest potential, in His love and His glory.

Amen.

Acknowledgments

Sermon Outlines – Susan Sayers