**SERMON FOR TRINITY 2**

Today, the Sunday after Trinity Sunday, our readings give us two different aspects to give us guidance on the faith we have that is the basis of way we should live in our Christian journey. St Paul as so often goes back to fundamentals. He wrote to the Church in Rome in his usual dense closely argued way about their (and our) relationship with the Godhead, Father Son and Spirit. If our belief in the creator God with a Trinitarian nature is not complete rubbish (and I hope that’s your belief) then it deserves to be taken seriously and that’s what Paul was teaching. He wrote to both Jews and Gentiles about God’s plan through Jesus to bring those who chose to listen to a new real understanding of what God was all about and how that should shape our relationship with Him. For Paul it’s all or nothing.

As an example of this take a look at the early chapters of Acts, (read on from Acts 4) and you will see how the apostles and the church reacted to the arrest and questioning by the Sanhedrin of Peter and John and their subsequent release. When they got back to their friends Peter and John explained what had happened (they healed a crippled man in Jesus’ name), they talked in public about what happened (and were arrested) they were questioned (and astonished the Sanhedrin by their boldness) and were released. They needed guidance on how to continue and shared their problem with the church and then they prayed. They did not for ask for protection from the risks of re-arrest when they disobeyed the Sanhedrin because they were determined to continue to tell people about Jesus and His resurrection - but they asked for grace that would allow them to continue. They were going to disobey the authorities and face the consequences.

So often when we pray it is for release from a problem that we face – and coronavirus is a good example - rather than for God’s grace to meet the challenge. It’s as if we constantly pray for an easy ride instead of facing the issue. If we go back to the Epistle reading, that’s what Paul is getting at in the middle of today’s passage. He knew from his own experience that facing problems caused by this determination to tell people about the Gospel builds up his (and our) strength our character and our hope. In our current challenging situation let’s be positive that we can, with God’s grace through the Spirit, find positives if we allow ourselves to be guided and enabled to perceive God’s way.

The last section of the reading reminds us that God is totally consistent in how He faces dilemmas. Unlike many politicians today he did not squeal and squirm (or even run away to Mummy and Daddy) when face with a difficult situation. Paul put himself at great risk of injury when tried to convince people of God’s love; to teach people what God was like, how much he cared for his sinful fallible people – yes, you and me – and how the Father gave up what was most precious - his Son – as a sacrifice that proved his authority, his love and his devotion.

Jesus was, of course, just the same. If we read today’s Gospel account carefully we can see him sizing up the dilemma he faced as an individual who, no matter how gifted he was, couldn’t do everything himself. Even Jesus could not be in two places at once. He had been hugely successful. He travelled with his band of followers round the cities and villages in Galilee and taught and healed the people there. He was welcomed everywhere but success brings its problems. How could he cope with the demand? The only way was the risky way of delegating what he did do to his chosen 12 men – all listed for our attention; names we know including the traitor Judas Iscariot. He gathered his chosen group and told them what he expected of them. He gave them significant gifts that would enable them to do the same amazing tasks that he, Jesus, had done. He defined what he wanted them to do; to visit the towns and villages that had already been visited. They were to reinforce the message about the good news Jesus was bringing to them. They could use the powers he had given to verify their actions and teaching by driving out evil spirits and healing every disease and sickness. And like the Acts story of the apostles healing a crippled man and being arrested outside the Temple I mentioned earlier, there was no safety net. They were not to take money or provisions or spare clothes or even a bag to carry things in that would support them; they were to rely completely on the reaction and generosity of the people they talked to. What a challenge. I’m sure they went out in fear and trembling. Verse 26 is the instruction “So do not be afraid of them.” If you turn to Luke Chapter 10 you read that 72 were sent (the same story as sending the 12?) and they returned triumphant at the reaction.

I think these are important readings that can guide us in how we are His disciples. What I’ve got from our readings are:-

1. The foundation of our life in Christ is fundamental – belief in God, Father, Son and Spirit - and if we take it seriously it’s no soft ride. We are all called in our different ways to be willing to talk about our faith and explain why we live the distinctive way we do (or should do). We are made in the image of God and called to be image bearers to others. That’s the foundation of our faith.
2. We are called to show God’s love and in these difficult times (for those of us who are able-bodied) there are lots of opportunities for talking, encouraging, doing things for others that show God’s love. People will notice and appreciate.
3. It’s tough going in our own strength to do things but that’s not what we are called for. In God’s sight we are on an equal footing with the disciples who were with Jesus. They were given the gifts and talents they needed for their task; we are assured that we will be treated in the same way for the tasks we have. And we are promised that what we do will bear fruit.

So I offer God’s blessings on you all as you journey through the wilderness of lock-down. Be of good cheer because God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and He loves us.

Ron Bundock

**Today’s readings**

Romans 5: 1-8 Therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope. And hope does not disappoint us because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.

You see, at just the right time when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love in this; while we were still sinners Christ die for us.

Matthew 9:35 -10:8 Jesus went through all the towns and villages teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.’

He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon (called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ’Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go. Preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near’. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.’