

### SERMON JULY 5<sup>TH</sup> 2015

I have a quote from Jane Williams, the wife of the previous Arch Bishop of Canterbury who is possibly writing from experience when she says, whilst talking about Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "It is not wrong to long for love and support and understanding. But those things, like mystical experiences, are occasional luxuries, rather than the staple fare of Christians."

Paul found this, Jesus did as well in his own town. Neither were what their audiences thought they wanted. Paul was not the 'super apostle' that the Corinthians had experienced with others, Jesus was being judged on his background, he wasn't Messiah material it was considered.

The problems that Paul faced in his ministry still happen today. We all have a tendency to judge others, in our thoughts and by what we say. We feel we or our way of doing things is better than others, our way is 'right' and what God wants or deserves.

I will be exploring the talk that Pere Dominic Lubot gave at the recent Filling Station meeting in Grapevine, but one point fits in with this. It is that we should guard our tongue as one small spark can start a forest fire. I'm sure many people in Nazareth repeated what someone else had said about Jesus, others then felt confident enough to put into words their thoughts and the same happened on Palm Sunday with outpouring of praise and on Good Friday with condemnation, it didn't take much to flame the forest fire.

Because we humans are like that, we join in with the crowd, we speak without thinking, sometimes even speak maliciously and gossip becomes truth the more it is passed on. An example of that was with the birth of the royal baby – the internet reported it as having happened before it did, and many people sent the couple congratulations!

The Bible is a very good source of showing us how less than perfect people are used by God and Paul says that if we recognise our

weaknesses we can only rely on God. God has called us all by name to serve him. Paul had asked God to take his weakness away, but God did not, he was asked to believe that God was for him whether other people recognised that or not, he was dependant on God, not other people's opinions.

Jesus did not have the power he usually did in his home town, he just laid hands on a few people and healed them. That 'little' power would be amazing here and now wouldn't it? But what was his response to all of this? He went about teaching in the villages and then sent his disciples, two by two, to spread God's word and love and healing. What was most important was not that people honoured him but God and as many as possible had the chance to hear God's word and experience his love.

And that is our job, to help people hear his word and know his love, and know that what we say about him is true because they can see how we love others and each other.