

## Sermon 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity 26<sup>th</sup> June 2016

After the events of the last few weeks in the UK we are all going to need a good dose of the Holy Spirit's gifts. There has been much division, bitter words and tempers flaring; people have felt the hatred of others. We are in the privileged position of being able to vote and we are asked by Paul in his letter to the Galatians "Not to use our freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment. 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'"

I am not making this a political sermon, I am not going to ask how you voted or say what I think about the result, it is what it is. What I am suggesting is that, as Christians, we have a responsibility to act in a Christian way. We are to live by the Spirit, to display the fruits of the Spirit which Paul tells us are: "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"

All of these qualities are much needed now as the United Kingdom starts to learn how to live with a new reality. In God's kingdom there is no room for racism, for hatred, for inequality; we are one body all are equal, all are beloved children of God.

The debates have been heated, both sides have bent the truth, both have presented speculation as fact, but now healing is needed as we move into the unknown. We are called to be peacemakers, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God'. Blessed is more than happiness, it is that joy and happiness that comes from being kingdom people, counter cultural often, we are asked to have different attitudes, we reflect the self-sacrifice and humility of Jesus. Earlier in chapter 5 of this letter Paul writes: "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

Of course we cannot do this in our own strength, in John's Gospel Jesus says: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself, it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

Being in Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit we can be fruitful in this troubled world. Through prayer we can discover what our gifts are and how they can be used at this time. It may be that for some the display of the Spirit's fruitfulness will be enhanced to love those who think differently, for others it

may be to actively seek peace, some may need to exercise more self-control in what they say and do. But remember that all those emotions listed as fruitfulness are applicable to all of us. Paul is very good at giving lists and sometimes his lists of the gifts of the Holy Spirit include things such as prophecy and teaching. We have need of God's prophets today, to point out the way to a nation that is divided and unsure of its identity as a Christian country.

I don't know if this outcome of the voting was part of God's plan, Christians I respect were on both sides of the debate, members of my family were on both sides, people have felt passionately, but what we can pray is "Your will be done." We can trust God in this issue as we do in the other issues of our lives. We can pray that we can display the fruits of the Spirit to others, that the energy that is used by hatred and division can be put to better use, to building a future, to bringing unity and peace.

The Gospel reading shows us that now that the Spirit who spoke through the prophets is now speaking through the Son; and what is now required is not the zeal that will burn up the opposition as the disciples wanted to do in the way of Elijah, but to transform lives through love. Our God is the God of transformation. Living as Christians we need to check frequently that we are still walking in step with the Spirit, that we are displaying those fruits that Paul lists. By our example, through the way we act and interact we can demonstrate that transformation and affect our world and our neighbours. Into this time we can bring some of God's kingdom to earth.