

Sermon Proper 13 2nd August 2015

While I was away there was a lot on the internet about an American dentist hunting and killing a lion called Cecil and some other African big game, but it was Cecil that caught the public imagination. Yesterday somebody had posted a message that said something like this: 'We have been campaigning about the death of a lion, now let's tackle the real problem in Africa' and showed a picture of an emaciated child.

The reasons for the hunting of wild animals and poverty in Africa are many and complex, should both be stopped? Yes would be my answer. Which is the priority? Difficult. When a species dies out it is lost forever and we were given stewardship of God's creation and one way and another we are destroying it. However I firmly believe that no-one should be hungry or have only dirty water to drink in the 21st century. Poverty doesn't make for good photo opportunities, it seems to be unstoppable from Africa to the rubbish tips of Brazil, from the affluent West to the former Soviet states. But

as ever, some have too much and some none at all.

The Jews in today's Gospel reading remember the stories they have heard of their ancestors starving in the wilderness. And possibly, as they have the time to follow Jesus so closely, they know times of hunger themselves. They had enjoyed the bread that they had been given the day before, they were very impressed by Jesus; in fact Jesus was afraid that they were going to take him by force and make him king, and went alone to the mountain, in the morning when they couldn't find him they searched him out.

Jesus suggests to them that they have only followed him because they 'ate their fill', not because of his teachings. They ask him what they should do for God. Jesus once again reminds us that it is not what we do so much as what or in whom we believe that is important.

The first step in our faith is to believe in Jesus, the Son of God the Father, who came down to earth to give us life. The people wanted miracles, despite having been fed the day

before, Jesus wanted them to believe, to make a commitment.

I guess we would all like a good miracle, it would help our faith along really well, especially if it was something we could show others or tell them about. But it doesn't work like that. Some people get gold teeth without asking, others don't get the healing earnestly prayed for. Jesus walked on water and Peter did for a short time, until he took his eyes off Jesus. John the Baptist had his head cut off, Paul was helped to escape from prison. Some things we just cannot explain, cannot fathom.

Jesus says: 'I am the bread of life, he who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.' Of course believers will suffer hunger and extreme thirst, but those are in the physical world and this is spiritual. Often people feel a gap, a hole, a hunger in their lives for something. What that something is they often don't know; but what they do know is that nothing ever satisfies it for long. However much shopping they do, however much money they

make, however many drugs or drinks they use, nothing is enough for long.

With Jesus, we have more than enough, so much that we can share it with others. And if we, the church, really were working in the unity of one body and one Spirit, using our individual gifts and respecting others gifts, think what good we could do in this world as we shared God's love for his creation.

When his kingdom is established here on earth and we are one, the poverty that is so heart breaking to see and makes me feel so helpless, will be eradicated, the need to kill animals for sport will end. It is beyond my imagining, the gloriousness of those times, but for now, we have to work as best we can, the kingdom is here and now as well as in the future and it is up to us to play our part. As part of the one body it is up to you to be the best little finger that you can be and believe that your contribution is priceless to the whole.