

Trinity 2 2017 La Chapelle Achard

Gen 18 1-15; Rom 5 1-8; Mt 9. 35-10. 8

What is the nature of our relationship with God? Our readings this morning invite us to reflect on our fears caused by our limited understanding of His love and purposes for our lives, and to find peace in trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In our OT story we see God promising Abraham and Sarah a son and two types of laughter. The first is cynical, unbelieving. Sarah, long past the menopause, with a 100 year old husband, has just heard someone tell her that next year she will have a child. Her laughter is of the 'you must be joking' variety but, interestingly enough, she denies it when faced with the one who made the promise.

The second is the joyful, full hearted laughter of love, which arises from the knowledge of what God has done. The promise has been fulfilled. He has miraculously given them a son and, in so doing, taken away a lifetime's disappointment at their lack of children.

In our gospel reading we see Jesus looking with compassion on people whom He sees as lost, like sheep without a shepherd, and sending out his disciples to tell the lost sheep of the house of Israel that the kingdom of God is at hand.

Imagine if we were in the place of the disciples. Go out – leave the security of being in Jesus' company and watching what He does - and do what He does.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons. Freely give away to others what God has given to us and don't even think about our own needs of food, lodging, or worry about what to say or do when faced with opposition and persecution. What we are called to do is reach out to others whom many despise or fear, the lost, the last and the least and bring God's love and healing to them. This is challenge enough, but we are also called to forget ourselves and trust God to supply all our needs. Scary, or what? What would our response be? It is not surprising that many of us don't feel up to the challenge and pray that God will send someone else – rather as Moses did when God called him to return to Egypt to lead His people out of slavery. I'm

reminded of the First World War song, 'Send my mother, send my brother, send my sister but for God's sake don't send me.'

I read a story this week. During a power cut a householder went to the cupboard when she kept her candles. She lit one and was about to go into another room when she heard a voice saying, 'what are you doing?' The candle was speaking to her. She answered that she needed the candle to take light into the darkness. 'But that's difficult. I'm not ready to do that yet, I need more training. I would hate to make a mistake.'

'Giving light in the darkness is what candles are for' the householder replied, but if that's how you feel I'll use another candle. So she lit a second only to hear another voice. 'I'm sorry, but I'm busy meditating on the nature of light and how to become more enlightened. I'm not ready either.'

So she lit a third only to hear a voice saying, 'I'm waiting to get my life together. I need all the help I can get. I'm no use to anyone else yet'

She lit her last candle and heard a sweet voice saying. 'I'd love to help you, but that's not my gift. I'm a singer. I'll sing to the others to encourage them to get on with the light bringing to the darkness work.' So she started to sing. 'This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.' All the others joined in and found it very comforting, but they stayed where they were whilst the rest of the house remained in darkness.

A simple, perhaps silly story, but it has its point. Being Jesus' disciple, telling and living the good news is scary and we really can't do it, or even want to try to do it, without His help.

Fortunately that is at hand. Jesus does not leave us to struggle in our own strength, He knows our weaknesses and our fears and has promised to be with us, in the power of His Holy Spirit, to the end of the age Mt 28

So He will teach us what to say and do, give us faith and hope and courage in the face of every difficulty and will bring us safely at last in to His kingdom.

Our epistle tells us how. 'Therefore, since we are justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Our relationship with God, our knowledge of His love and forgiveness which we receive by faith and the peace

which it brings to us, is God's gift to us through Jesus Christ. We cannot earn it, however hard we try and God will not stop loving us and calling us back to Him, however much we turn our backs on Him. This is grace.

When we experience this love by inviting Jesus to come into our lives and be our Lord and Saviour, God gives us all we need to face whatever life may bring our way. The ability not only to face persecution and disappointments, but to grow through our experience of them to trust God more as we realise that God's love has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit – Christ in us, the hope of glory.

The guarantee of all this is that Jesus did not wait until we were worthy to receive His love, properly trained to understand and to share it, but died for us whilst we were still sinners. It is knowing this in the depths of our being, trusting it is true in whatever situation we find ourselves, that will enable us to be the disciples Jesus calls us to be.

Here is something I read in Our Daily Bread – one of the many resources available to help us in our prayers.

'if you find that Christianity exhausts you, draining you of your energy, then you are practising religion rather than enjoying relationship with Jesus Christ. Your walk with the Lord will not make you weary; it will invigorate you, restore your strength and energise your life. Mt 11 26-29

Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this passage in The Message reads 'Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?... Walk with me and work with me... Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. The unforced rhythms of grace give us God's peace. He is the one who does the work. He wants to pour His love into us until it overflows and pours out to others.

May we all rest in the love of God in Christ, trust in His love and purpose and allow Him to make us channels of His grace. Amen