

Sermon 15th Sunday after Trinity

The Gospel reading today reminds us that every day, all of the time we have to make a choice. Jesus uses dramatic words like 'hating one's family' to remind us that we have to put him before everything else. Of course hatred goes completely against the good news of his teaching, but that dramatic use of language reminds us that following Jesus is not always comfortable and easy.

We have to choose not just between what we will wear today or what we will eat for supper, but whether our life is going to be grounded in Jesus. Today will we go deeper in our relationship with him? How can we show his love to the beggar on the street? Will this conversation allow us to share the good news that Jesus changes lives?

But of course it's not only the big things that show that we have chosen to put Jesus first in our lives, it is the words we say to and about

others, how we manage our waste, how we care for our neighbours and neighbourhood.

We are unaware of the consequences of many of the choices we make, although sometimes it becomes obvious further down the line. But choosing or not choosing to follow Jesus is one choice we do know the consequence of, we can inherit God's kingdom if we choose Jesus.

But we are challenged with more than making a simple choice, we are challenged to make an informed decision and then to act on it. Not, of course in our own strength, but through God's strength.

Another part of making this choice is about living in the moment, being aware, really aware of what is happening, what we are thinking, doing or saying. What God is saying to us or doing through another person? So often many of us will glide through situations responding habitually; not perhaps listening carefully to what is being said or to our own response, repeating old patterns of behaviour.

All of this is not easy. It is not easy to think back on the day and count what we have been given, what we may have given. Of course I am not talking of material things here, or at least not solely, but of a helping hand, some time to listen, a kind word.

Deuteronomy asks us to 'Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord.' Paul, is asking Philemon, not very subtly, to choose to love his slave Onesimus as a brother and welcome him as such. Jesus is asking us to give up all we value in worldly terms to follow him.

Following Jesus is expensive, it costs everything. Placing God at the centre of our lives means deliberately placing him at the centre of our thinking and working, our emotions and feelings, our energy and ambitions and in the centre of every relationship and every decision. Even making the decision to live like this is costly as we try to make our way through the minefields of everyday life and try to think carefully about where God is in that situation

we find ourselves in, where is God in this moment of our lives?

The way is expensive, it is hard, as was the journey to the cross, this much Jesus has taught us in these recent passages from Luke but he is desperately trying to get his message through to his followers, that things would not be as they expected them to be, but that our eternal lives depend on the choices we make now, in the earthly realm, that it is in relationship with God the Father that we have our being and our life.