

Sermon notes for the Sunday of Estomihi 2010

Isaiah 58: 1-8a

Mark 8: 31-38

1 Corinthians 13

“8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge it will pass away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.”

Grace, Mercy and Peace from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

Isaiah – the right Fast

Again as last week in Hebrews 4 we see a reprimand from God to use the Sabbath day for what He created it, to rest and to worship Him in what we do. Again the text shows us that our focus must change, from being self orientated, all about me, to all about God.

On Wednesday we begin Lent, a time of fasting and reflection on the Sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for us and our sins. A time when we will be fasting like the people of God were called to do. We too can focus our fasting on ourselves, giving up TV or Coke or even doing the traditional fast and not eating between sunrise and sunset, but not using that time or the food we save to feed the hungry or the time to help the needy, clothe the naked or care for our own parents and family. (Is 58v7)

We can make the same mistake the people of God made, or we can focus on Christ crucified, Christ resurrected, and know that we have won a great victory already in His resurrection, now the battle is to live the life that He needs and wants us to live for Him and for the people of His kingdom.

Yes, Fasting about self-reflection, but it is also about making time to increase and correct the balance of how important I am vs how important God is in my life.

How selfish and self centered has your focus been, and where can you change it in Lent?

Mark – a selfless and Christ directed Life

“Get the behind me satan! ... You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

v33 - how easy it is for us to focus our existence on man, on ourselves and on what we want and need, and to forget about what God has asked of us. Often even in the church we will judge and condemn and cast aside the things that some do when they focus on Christ and living for Him. They are often doing things that we don't want to do, and so will claim don't have to do for our salvation. And they are right, you don't have to do anything for your salvation. But what does Jesus ask you to do with your salvation? - To live it.

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”v34-35

This is the selfless mindset that God was talking about in Isaiah, it is the one that Jesus lived, and the one that we who are saved, by the work and blood of Jesus Christ, are living in, and are called to live in till the day of our calling home. This is the faith in which we hope to die one day, but for now the faith in which we live and baptise our children. A faith that focuses outside of ourselves and

looks to Jesus.

This Lent, how will you be refocussing your life and your mindset on Christ?

1 Corinthians 13 – perfecting your Faith

Where does this mindset come from? How does one become more loving? How do you take your knowledge(v2) and your abilities and make them count for something in the eyes of God?

Well there is only one way, through the power and help of the Holy Spirit, through coming to the celebration of the Sacraments and knowing that here the Lord comes to you and renews your strength so that you might soar on wings like an eagle, but also so that you might overcome the troubles and worries of this world, and so that you will grow in love and not hardness in this world that is no longer caring.

What does this different attitude and focus look like?

This Lent you will again have a chance to re-evaluate your attitude, your faith and determine how good your relationship with God is. The way we treat others is a reflection of our relationship with God. Just because we do not kill or steal or speak badly about others does not mean that our relationship with God is good, for even the heathen does these things. Our relationship with others is determined by the love we show them, and love is extraordinary, it is more than we want to do but not more than we should do.

The Love that is spoke of is not romantic love as we will be reminded tonight, but Agape, the love that God has shown us through His Son Jesus Christ, and the love that He taught us to live. It is amazing how theologians like Luther who often is considered to be legalistic, because he lived so long ago, taught and lived a life of Christian love that we could take an example from.

God is love, He is not a loving God, but is the author of love. And in that we find an understanding of how great He is. Because where our loves so often faith, He is love and that is why He never fails us. He is the perfection, the completion and the fulfilment of all things, faith hope and love, of which love is the greatest.

The Greek word for perfection here (TELEIOS) is also used to mean “mature” or “complete”. Does it refer to the coming again of Christ who is the perfection of all things, or to our death when all things for each of us is complete, or does it refer to our faith and how we mature in faith?

When we are mature we set aside childish things, but when we are older, it does not mean that we are mature. Adults are often not focussed on the right things in life, like we heard today when Jesus rebuked Peter. Even as a disciple of the Lord, Peter's focus and spiritual maturity was not right.

But God gave Peter and so too us is teachings, His example and His Holy Spirit, all that we need to ensure that we will remain in faith, grow in faith and be faithful with what He has given us.

Amen

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