

Talk for Sunday 17th May 2020

Our reading today, on first read may have left you trying to make sense of it. It talks about the unity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – collectively we call this the Trinity as you will all know, but it can be difficult to get our heads around the concept. It also uses words that sit uncomfortably with our modern ears; such as obedience. It doesn't seem to fit with our idea of God as a God of love and a gentle loving Father.

The context of this passage is of Jesus preparing his disciples for his coming departure from amongst them. They didn't understand this at that time, so Jesus teaches them, aiming to instil some key messages that will give them a strong bedrock on which to build their faith in the years ahead.

Jesus is aiming to give them REASSURANCE, he wants to convict them of his LOVE for them and to emphasise the response to being loved by and of loving the Creator God: an obligation to OBEDIENCE, living according to His will.

The disciples were soon to be plunged into massive uncertainty and a period that would have, no doubt, felt incredibly dark and abandoned. Perhaps, in these current days, we have some understanding of what that may have felt like? His reassurances given here, hinge on three things:

1. The promise of the Holy Spirit, to be with us forever
2. That he, Jesus, will be alive and give us life
3. Jesus emphasises that the Father God and He, the Son, are one and that He and us are also one through his Spirit. This unity is what draws us fully to God as His children – hence Jesus saying that we are no longer orphans.

As always, with faith, there is a choice; a decision to be made. So, Jesus tells us that IF we choose to love God, then His love for us is assured, it is constant, and it is everlasting. Jesus also tells the disciples that not only is His love assured but that He will reveal himself to all who believe. This would have been in stark contrast to what went before in the OT where God revealed himself to few – mostly prophets, kings and leaders. It would have been a revolutionary thought – not just that the common man might have God revealed to them, but that it is ALL who believe – which hints that Jesus' salvation goes far beyond the people of Israel. Something that we can testify to and constantly thank God for.

I mentioned earlier that there is a consequence to being loved by and of loving God. This is our response to His love, and it is the obligation to be obedient to Him. We do this out of love for him, by reading His word and by applying it into our own situations – it leads us to look for ways in which to serve Him and show His love to all people.

If, as Jesus says in verse 20, we are all joined together in Jesus, who in turn is joined as one with God through the Holy Spirit, then the closer we draw into that relationship, the more Christ like we will become. Paul talks about this in Galatians chapter 5 when he describes our obedience as being ‘Fruit of the Spirit’: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Note that he calls them the Fruit of the SPIRIT. It is the Spirit that is central to the binding of our relationship and the bond is one of love.

We are known by God and marked by Him. Let us think about how we can work to strengthen this link between ourselves and God, so we are one with Him, filled with the Spirit and overflowing with the love of Jesus.

Prayer – Let us pray:

Heavenly Father, help us to make time to strengthen this unity with you, to listen to your word, to hear your guidance and to be obedient as we grow in our Love for you. May we show your fruit in our relationships with others and let your ways guide us in all that we do.

AMEN