

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

YEAR B

28th June 2009

1. **Money can be a touchy topic.** There are people who have left their churches over stewardship envelopes for regular giving and sometimes you hear complaints about paying assessment to Synod. "It's between me and God", "It's none of the church's business", and "The Church is always asking for money" are common sayings. It's no surprise then that Paul wrote to some of the early Christian communities about this topic too.
2. **2 Cor. 8.(1-6) 7-15** is an excerpt from several chapters devoted to Paul's project assisting the mother Church in Jerusalem and at the same time binding the younger churches together in a common cause. The collection had begun a year earlier but Paul's bad relationship with the Corinthian Christians had resulted in their withdrawal of support. He cites the example of the poor but generous Macedonian church. He points out that giving is not compulsory, that generosity is a proper response to the generous love of God; and that there is the question of a fair balance between the abundance one has and the need of others.
3. **Jesus mentioned money a great deal.** Here are some of the things he said: Give alms without fanfare; you cannot serve God and wealth; welcome and provide for others; sell your possessions, give money to the poor; give to God the things that are God's; and one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions. He was not afraid to mention money.
4. **His whole life was generous, showing the generosity of God** in continuing his work of creation and redemption, liberally loving us, forgiving our sins, and raising us to new life. Jesus was generous in relationships - healing people without payment, having time for children and outcasts (Mark 5.21-43); giving time and compassion to those who were lost and seeking healing, wholeness and hope; giving his life so that we may live.
5. **We are called to be generous as God is generous.** .Giving generously, we can make God's presence more visible in our lives and in our world. Giving helps people live righteous lives. Being faithful people and sharing in good measure should change our lives – forever. This is the goal. Give of your time, energy, and talents but also give money. Giving of yourself is not a substitute for giving of money. They go together.

TRINITY SUNDAY

YEAR B

7th June 2009

1. **Christians are Trinitarians**, that is, we believe in One God who is Father, Son and Spirit. In the Nicene Creed we find the doctrine in several lines— The Son is 'of one being with the Father', the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son'. In The Gloria we say it at the end with 'you alone are the most High Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father'. The mystery of God has been explained in many ways and yet is inexplicable. By experience, we know God as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, so intimately that we call him Father, Son and Spirit Because of the relationship we have with God, a relationship with all three dimensions, we believe in God as three in one and one in three,
2. **We are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit** and we understand that in our baptism we become children of God, members of Christ and heirs of the kingdom of God (APBA p. 60) . Paul expresses this fully in Romans 8.12-17 where he makes these points
 - If you commit your life to Christ then your outlook changes. You come under the influence of the power of God and old ways are put aside. Death is past when life in the Spirit begins. We become God's children not his slaves, so there is no place for fear in the relationship, only intimacy and love. When we feel called to name God, 'Father', the Spirit is moving us to bear witness to this intimacy.
 - As 'adopted children', we share with Christ in his suffering, but with the promise of sharing his glory.
3. **As children of God and in the power of the Spirit we are called to be Christ-like** in our lives, truly human, yet acting as he did to be compassionate and holy, loving God and our neighbours. The Trinity is not just a doctrine, but for us a way of being too as we act out our lives as children of God, following the example of Christ who lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

Second Sunday after Pentecost

YEAR B

14th June 2009

1. **We humans can often be very judgmental** about others and even about ourselves. We judge by human standards whether anyone is good enough, clever enough, faithful enough and so on. Paul addresses this question in 2 Cor. 5.6-10. 14-17, reminding us that in Christ we are new creations. So what might this mean for us? Both the Old Testament reading and the Gospel have a message for us:
2. **When the prophet Samuel** cast about for a king to replace Saul he obviously had a set of criteria in mind but the Lord said to him, "...the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart". David, the youngest son and therefore the least likely, the least knowledgeable, the least skilled is the one chosen by the Lord. (1 Sam. 15.34- 16.13). No-one is beyond doing the Lord's work. What matters is attitude. If a person loves God then it is amazing what God can do through them. Our task in our congregations is to discern those people who love the Lord, who are called by him, those who have a burning desire to work for the Lord in some aspects of ministry and to support and encourage them. There is no place for phrases like 'You're too old' or 'I'm too old'; 'you don't know enough' or 'I don't know enough'.
3. **Never underestimate the power of God** . Jesus gave two parables to illustrate this. Remember it is God that gives the growth (Mark 4.26-29). We have our parts to play but God is the giver of life and in him things grow. Small and insignificant things can produce surprising results (Mark 4.30-32). Like the mustard seed, a tiny germ of an idea can produce amazing results if we but trust the power of God to work in and through us.
4. **In Christ we are new creations**. Believe this and let him give the growth!

Third Sunday after Pentecost

YEAR B

21st June 2009

1. **Shallow waters are often dangerous**. In South Australia we know how quickly waves can be whipped up on Lake Alexandrina and similar stretches of water. (Tell any personal story of facing similar danger). The Sea of Galilee or the Sea of Gennesaret is similar. It is in a depression in the Jordan Valley about 18km long and 11 km wide in a pocket in the hills, a location which subjects it to sudden violent storms. Imagine the disciples fear as the wind rose and the boat began to be swamped. Jesus slept through it and the disciples felt that he didn't care. On being woken Jesus rebuked them as well as to the wind and waves. And their response? To be in awe of one with such authority, to know that even when seeming to be 'absent (asleep) he still was the one to care, the one to save them. (Mark 4.35-41)
2. **Has there been a time of crisis in your life** when you were afraid and God seemed to be absent or asleep, when you felt that no one cared for you, not even God? (You may have a story yourself which you can tell as an example). How did you feel? Where is God in your recollection of this event? Did your faith waver? Was Jesus there all the time? How did he calm your storm? How do you regard him now as you look back on that fearful time? Similarly there may be times of strife in our congregation where fear has caused us to doubt Christ's presence and his Spirit seems not to be with us.
3. **We know that Paul went through extreme hardship**—imprisonment, shipwreck, hostility, criticism and rejection. In 2 Cor. 6.1-13, Paul speaks of the grace of God in his life through all his sufferings. He endured physical and emotional strife, yet recognized the grace of God with him through it all. He urges them too to know the power of God in their lives , power to save, to give words, or knowledge, patience etc so that in times of crisis the best response can be made . The metaphorical waves and winds can attack but God will be there graciously supporting us through whatever besets us.
4. **The collect for today** is a good way to end the sermon