

Sermon 18th Sept 2016

Jesus : Saviour and Lord

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As we come here this morning, we have all come for different reasons, some for worship, some for fellowship, some people because they have to be here, some of us are here thinking we'd rather be somewhere else or have minds on what the rest of the day holds. Even with these thoughts or reasons what is it that is the pull, what it is that draws us to church? Why have we gathered here this morning?

We have heard this morning in our reading that we have a clear instruction to praise God, "praise the Lord, you servants of the Lord, from the rising of the sun to the setting Praise The Lord" Psalm 113 is often used at the beginning of a Jewish Passover meal as they celebrate & remember their exodus out of Egypt. This is one of six Psalms called the Egyptian Hallel Psalms. The Hebrew word Halal means praise. Praise conveys the idea of awe and wonder. The words of awe and wonder are words we mostly hear around advent and Christmas time. The meanings of awe is an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, fear, etc., produced by that which is grand, sublime, extremely powerful, or the like: in awe of God; in awe of great political figures. Wonder means to think or speculate curiously, to be filled with admiration, amazement, a miraculous deed or event; remarkable phenomenon. Admittedly I cannot remember the last time I came to church expecting to feel those feelings.

When we are looking at Psalm 113 we also need to remember the Psalms that are before and after in particular 111 & 112. This set of Psalms is referred to as the Hallelujah psalms. 111-113 All start with the words "Praise the Lord & 113 also ends with these words to. The sentence "praise the Lord" is translated from the Hebrew word Hallelujah. Psalm 111 focuses on the works of God, Psalm 112 describes the work of a Godly person and Psalm 113 focuses on Gods call to be praised - it's a we must do. God's name is to be praised there is no compromise or comparison, there is no apologetic & no only if you fell like it a direct instruction "Praise the Lord, O servants of the Lord"

So let's now think about the reading from Luke 16 where Jesus is using a parable to illustrate a story. Nowadays when we want to understanding the meaning of a story we often use a story or a DVD, YouTube clip to illustrate the moral meaning, the point or learning from the story - this is exactly what Jesus was doing with the disciples, he is using the parable to understand the message. Let's unpack this message and how it ties into our reading from the Psalms.

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It is thought that the rich man refers to God the Father and the manager is ourselves. Notice the metaphor and symbolism that the manger is referred to as a workman that is slacking, he isn't doing the job very well. It's like having an appraisal at work when you're not meeting your targets and there is notice to improve. So the manager comes away knowing he needs a second plan a back up because clearly this job isn't going to last for very long. The second plan comes into action as he becomes kind to others in order to gain later, storing up the good will for later when he needs it. So what is the moral of this story, what was Jesus saying to the disciples and how can we learn from it.

When Jesus turned directly to the disciples in verse 9 and asks "when all the money is gone - where will their dwelling place be? When all the money and possessions fall away and when we eventually die- Where will our dwelling place be?

The moral of the story that Jesus is teaching the disciples is

Be careful to do a good job, be shrewd and to have wise judgment, so when this life comes to an end be assured you will enter the Kingdom of heaven.

We are told in other bible teachings and parables that it is not through good works however it is through believing wholehearted in Christ, living a life that is worthy of Christ, entering into a spiritual relationship with him through prayer, study his word and worship.

Just as the manager in the parable was told by the rich man to sharpen his act up and to be active in making that provision later on, it's the same for us. Christ often reminds us that we need to sharpen our game up. We too need to make sure that our lives demonstrate that we are true disciples of Christ, filled with God's love.

In verse 13-14 we are clearly told that no-one can have two masters, Jesus takes this parable to the next level by saying all who are in Christ have a responsibility. To be on the look out - look out for false teaching, wolves in sheep's clothing as the saying goes. To be on guard for the distractions, the need for power or authority, the desire for wealth, money, the need to be the focus or in the limelight. This parable is saying that we should crave exactly the opposite, when craving or striving for earthly desires, our hearts and minds become removed from God, like the squandering manager.

We have a duty to correct ourselves and repent otherwise we will find ourselves on the wrong side of an awesome God. In the Psalm we are told that nothing is impossible, there are several pictures and analogies to visualise the message that he can do all things for all people - his name is to be praised, his Glory is above the heavens. The word LORD is usually translated, "I am what I am". We do not need to care or worry about the earthly things, what important is our relationship with him so we know where our dwelling place is going to be.

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I'm a very black and white person, down to earth, it is what is - sort of attitude, I am in no way fluffy. At the age of 15 my parents were told this quiet clearly by my English Literature teacher and whilst I love English lit, fiction, poetry etc although doing quite well in the end I really had to work hard with finding the metaphors because it's all about interpretation. So when reading the passage in Luke again in my preparation time to read verses 10 onwards where there this clear instructions - this is my kind of language or literature one way or the other no middle ground.

There is a very clear message and lesson from Christ, when we are serving, putting our faith into action who is it that we are truly serving? Are we serving "ourselves" under the disguise of doing works for Christ? What are the true intentions? Are they Christ centred and focused? Is the intention of our worship truly exalting and praising God as in the Psalm reading?

I have often stood and sang the words " I coming back to the heart of worship - it's all about you, it's all about you Jesus". I have had to question has it really been all about Jesus - sometimes yes and sometimes no. Are my actions all about Jesus sometimes yes and sometimes no?

Our integrity often meets its match in the way we behave, do our actions, words and thoughts equate to the Christ we believe in. Our true faith in Christ meets its match when we put other things first, people, possessions in that place where Christ should be. God is our master. In his eyes a person's value has no relationship to their wealth, status or position. All people are valuable and equal in Gods eyes. In the Psalm verse 5 we are being asked - who is like the Lord our God?

Of course there is only one true God with power and authority over our lives but it's how we respond to Christ that is important. Actions, being a good person etc are nothing if the intention behind it all is for us instead of Christ. Our worship is nothing if it is for us rather than praising God and making him our very core and being of our entire lives. It means we care about pleasing Him with every aspect of our lives and we care that our lives are pleasing to Him in all that we do. The idea is that God's name is special in that we should honour God as "God" and not take our relationship with Him lightly.

Through our bible readings and particularly Luke through the parable Jesus is telling the disciples, we are invited to live the story, to live our lives with integrity putting God before anything or anyone else. This is not only a personal instruction but a church wide instruction. John Stott writes in his book Issues facing Christians today - The church is meant to be the Kingdom community, a model of what human community looks like when it comes under the rule of God"

As we worship here in this place praising God as instructed in the Psalms we must not separate Jesus the saviour from Jesus the Lord. His lordship extends far beyond the

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religious part of our lives - this bit here in Church. It embraces the whole of our existence, public and private, home, work, college or school.

So as we, as individuals examine our lives, challenge ourselves to live the story, putting God before anything else, exalting and praising God, placing him in his rightful place we will as individuals and as a church community can be assured of where our dwelling place will be. A coming together, a wanting and expecting the awe and wonder of Christ working in our lives every moment that we are breathing. A Holy people that belong to God. Amen.