



THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

August 30, 2020
Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray:

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



Moses took his father-in-law's sheep to Mount Horeb – another name for Mount Sinai. GOD then spoke to Moses from an unexpected source – a burning bush. When Moses saw it, he went to investigate. GOD may use unexpected sources when communicating to us too – whether people, thoughts, or experiences. We need to be willing to investigate – and be open to GOD's surprises.

Moses saw a burning bush and spoke with GOD. Many people in the Bible experienced GOD in visible (not necessarily human) form. Abraham saw the smoking firepot and the burning torch (Genesis 15:17). Jacob wrestled with a man (Genesis 32:24-29). When the slaves were freed from Egypt, GOD led them by pillars of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:17-22). GOD made such

appearances to encourage His new nation, to guide them, and to prove the reliability of His verbal message. At GOD's command, Moses removed his sandals and covered his face. Taking off his shoes was an act of reverence – conveying his own unworthiness before GOD. GOD is our friend, but He is also our sovereign LORD. To approach Him frivolously shows a lack of respect and sincerity. When we come to GOD in worship, we need to approach Him as an invited guest coming before a king – and our attitude must adapt so it is suitable for approaching a holy GOD.

GOD then appointed Moses to rescue the Israelites from Egypt and bring them to the promised land – no big deal – just go and talk to Pharaoh and tell him you are taking the bulk of his workforce to another country because the GOD of the universe desires it. No wonder Moses was described as being slow of tongue!

The theme of our psalm today is GOD's mighty deeds in bringing Israel to the Promised Land. If GOD seems far

away, we need to persist in our search for Him. GOD rewards those who sincerely look for Him¹. JESUS promised “Seek and you will find.”² The psalmist suggests a valuable way to find GOD – become familiar with the way He has helped people in the past. The Bible records the history of GOD’s people. In searching its pages, we will discover a loving GOD who is waiting for us to find Him.

By GOD blessing the Israelites, the Egyptians came to hate them – however, GOD used this animosity as a means to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

In our passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans we learn that love must be genuine. Some people learn how to pretend to love others – how to speak kindly, avoid hurting feelings, and appear to take an interest in the other person. They may even be skilled in pretending to feel moved with compassion when they hear of others’

¹ Hebrews 11:6

² Matthew 7:7

needs; or become indignant when they learn of injustice. But GOD calls us to real and sincere love that goes far beyond pretence and politeness. Sincere love requires concentration and effort. It means helping others become better people. It demands our time, money, and personal involvement. No individual has the capacity to express love to a whole community – but the body of CHRIST does. We need to notice people who need our love and look for ways we – as the Christian community – can love our community for CHRIST. We can honour people in 2 ways – with an ulterior motive OR we can use GOD’s way of love. As Christians, we can honour people by putting others first – because they are created in GOD’s image, because they are our brothers and sisters in CHRIST, and because they have a unique contribution to make to CHRIST’s Church.

Christian hospitality differs from social entertaining. Entertaining focuses on the host – the home must be spotless; the food must be well prepared and abundant;

the host must appear relaxed and good-natured. Hospitality, by contrast, focuses on the guests. Their needs – whether for a place to stay, nourishing food, a listening ear or acceptance – are the primary concern. Hospitality can happen in a messy home. It can happen around a dinner table where the main dish is canned soup. It can even happen when the host and the guest are doing chores together. We should never fail to offer hospitality just because we are too tired, too busy, or not wealthy enough to entertain.

Some people use their contacts and relationships for selfish ambition. They select those people who will help them climb the social ladder. CHRIST demonstrated and taught that we should treat all people with respect – those of different race, the handicapped, the poor, the young, the old, male, and female. We must NEVER consider others as being beneath us. Paul says we need to live in harmony with others and not be too proud to

enjoy the company of others and do humble tasks with them.

The last part of this passage summarises the core of Christian living. If we love someone the way CHRIST loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced GOD's grace, we will want to pass it on to others. And remember, grace is UNDESERVED favour. By giving an enemy a drink, we are not excusing their misdeeds. We're recognising them, forgiving them, and loving them in spite of their sins – just as CHRIST did for us.

In these days of constant lawsuits and incessant demands for legal rights, Paul's command sounds almost impossible. When someone hurts us deeply, instead of giving them what you think they might deserve, Paul says to befriend them. Why does Paul tell us to forgive our enemies?

1. Forgiveness may break a cycle of retaliation and lead to mutual reconciliation.

2. It may make the enemy feel ashamed and enough to change their ways.
3. By contrast, repaying evil for evil hurts us just as much as it hurts our enemy. Even if our enemy never repents, forgiving them will free us from a heavy load of bitterness.

Forgiveness involves both attitudes and actions. If we find it difficult to FEEL forgiving toward someone who has hurt us, we can TRY and respond with kind actions. If appropriate, tell this person you would like to heal this relationship. Many times, we will discover that right actions lead to right feelings.

What does it mean to **heap burning coals** on someone's head? This probably refers to an Egyptian tradition of carrying a pan of burning charcoal on one's head as a public act of repentance. By referring to this proverb, Paul was saying that we should treat our enemies with kindness so that they will become ashamed and turn

from their sins. The best way to get rid of enemies is to turn them into friends.

Our Gospel passage – even though it follows on from the one we looked at last week – is in contrast to it – especially from Peter’s point of view. Last week, he publicly declared JESUS as the Messiah, the Son of the Living GOD: ¹⁷And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’

In today’s passage, which begins with the words “from that time on”, there is a turning point. JESUS refers to Peter as Satan – a monumental turnaround. JESUS now begins to emphasise his death and resurrection more strongly. The disciples still didn’t grasp JESUS’ true

purpose because of their preconceived notions about what the Messiah should be.

This passage corresponds to the prophecies of the prophet Daniel – the Messiah would be cut off, there would be a period of trouble, and then the King would come in glory. The disciples would endure the same suffering as their King and, like Him, would be rewarded in the end. Peter was probably trying to protect JESUS from discomfort.

In His desert temptations, JESUS heard the message that He could achieve greatness without dying. Here, he basically heard the same thing from Peter. Peter had just recognised JESUS as the Messiah – however, he forsook GOD's perspective and evaluated the situation from a human one. As satan is always trying to get us to leave GOD out of the picture, we, like Peter, should be rebuked for such an attitude.

When JESUS used the picture of His followers taking up their cross to follow Him, the disciples knew exactly what

He meant. Crucifixion was a common Roman method of execution, and condemned criminals had to carry their crosses through the streets to the execution site. Following JESUS, therefore, meant a true commitment, the risk of death, and no turning back.

JESUS means 2 things when He says these words. If we look at the entire Gospel, we know that JESUS Himself is going to be put to death on a cross because He will not compromise His love for us no matter what the cost. We know that there were Christians in the early Church who also gave up their lives rather than deny CHRIST. In some parts of the world today where people do not enjoy the freedom of religion we do, this could still happen. For us, however, JESUS is using a figure of speech to remind us of something especially important. Being a disciple of JESUS means we will be living a life of love and compassion – and joy – that some people around us do not freely understand. Sometimes living this life – even if it is a better way – will put us at odds

with the world. Every day, we have opportunities to give our time, talents, and treasure, and sometimes this is not as easy as putting money on the collection plate when we come to Church. JESUS is telling us that there is a price to pay when we follow Him. He is giving us a glimpse into the realities of discipleship. GOD is in control – NOT US. The important thing to remember is that GOD will take care of us. We just have to trust Him.



GOD chose Moses to bring His people out of Egypt – a great example of equipping the called rather than calling the equipped.

The theme of our psalm today is GOD’s mighty deeds in bringing Israel to the Promised Land.

In the passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans, Paul teaches us that love must be genuine as must our interactions with people. And that if we love someone the way CHRIST loves us, we will be willing to forgive.

Our gospel teaches us about being a disciple of CHRIST. JESUS teaches us that there is a commitment involved.

Sister Frances Hayes puts it this way: So often Peter is – and we are – full of good intentions, but our humanity comes to the fore and we miss the point of what JESUS is on about. In what way are we like Peter? Do we think like GOD, or are our thoughts solely human thoughts? Our lives have been blessed in so many ways. How are we sharing this blessedness and enrichment with those around us? Can they see GOD’s love shining through our lives by the way we live? It is not what we say that counts but rather what we do. The life that others see us live is the life that will be rewarded.



May we pray:

Through the Passion of Your Son, O GOD, You have brought us salvation and the forgiveness of our sins. Give us the grace to bear whatever suffering we might encounter in this life so that we might enter into the eternal peace of Your kingdom. This we pray through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

GOD's Word 2020

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