

Musings ~ 15th October 2017

Whether we hear Isaiah at 0.900 am or Exodus at 10.00 am they, with our readings from Philippians and Matthew, have a common theme within them ~ they talk of a God that cares for His children ~ so much so that he reprimands when the children stray and they are likely to run into trouble ~ and they encourage us to recognise Him as such.

Each of us is encouraged to respond to that caring God, the God whose love is outrageously unconditional. Sometimes, of course, that love does not seem unconditional if we simply read biblical accounts out of context ~ God gets angry ~ but note that he rarely acts on that anger and if He does there is something specific that He wants to teach; wants us to learn. Always that teaching and learning is to enable us to come closer to Him ~ the Old Testament representing all the preparation that God does to enable the people to have access to a personal relationship with Him rather than a distant hierarchical one and the New Testament opening the way to the completion of that work through the ministry, passion and resurrection of Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

God always desires that we should recognise and come close to Him ~

- we are encouraged to recognise the true God and trust Him ~ not give up and worship material things.
- we are encouraged to find God in all things and to rejoice always, and
- we are invited to accept the invitation to the wedding banquet ~ the feast of eternal life.
- We are, in short, called to be disciples, apprentices, trainees of the greatest opportunity ever!

Where are you in that apprenticeship ?

It doesn't matter where you are on that journey but that you have started ~ to know Jesus and make Him known.

“Surely this is our God;
we trusted in him, and he saved us.
This is the Lord, we trusted in him;
let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.” Isaiah 25:9

Isaiah sings praises to God for all He has done and will do in fulfilment of His promises.

This is followed through in the letter to the Philippians (4:4)

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

Why should we rejoice ~ because the Lord is near and we should not be anxious about anything. You and I know full well that is not always easy ~ there are times and situations in life where humanly we are naturally anxious ~ but we do need to observe what else is said in that exhortation ~ namely that we should present our requests to God by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving. We are promised that we have the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

It goes on to tell us that these blessings are not bestowed on passive recipients but those who put into practice all that they have learned, received or heard from the Lord.

There are times when we fail to put into practice the things we have learned in faith ~ the times may be changes in our situations or distractions that mean we lose focus. When these occur there is often a fall out ~ sometimes minor and sometimes more drastic. Once we regain our focus and return to the Lord we can earn a lot from our lapses and by God's grace and disciplined hard work we can regenerate and continue our pilgrimage, individually and together and we will know God's peace.

There are times when things slip in such a way that we all need to seek help from others, Here at Immanuel we have reached the place of recognising the enormity and knock on or domino effect of not having the leadership infrastructure in

place and we are embarking on a strategy to help us put things in order. Pray with us as we work to prevent the cracks becoming any wider and to repair them. We need new and skilled breath to help us meet the challenge and move forward.

The Gospel reading in Matthew today records the Parable of the wedding banquet, Matthew places his accounts of Jesus ministry and the parables carefully and this parable comes as part of the teaching on the strength of believing, and Jesus having His authority questioned. It is followed by the teaching about paying taxes to Caesar, marriage at the resurrection and the greatest commandment to love God above all things and to love one another.

The parable talks about God's invitation to be with Him at the greatest banquet and that all are invited ~ so why is a man ejected?

One of the things that was customary at weddings in Jesus day was that each guest was issued a garment to wear when the feast was announced in honour of the occasion and celebration. Guests were invited well in advance but the actual start of the feast depended on when the groom had prepared all for His new bride and could be months later. ~ So to be found not wearing the garment that you had been given to wear at the banquet showed disrespect and disobedience ~ it dishonoured the host!

What do we learn from that?

Our God is gracious to those who chose to be disciples ~ but does not tolerate those who have no intention of growing in faith but want the perks of being part of His family! Each of needs to regularly examine our faith and work at developing our relationship with God ~ so we can truly rejoice in the Lord always. Amen.