

St Marc, Grenoble
Sunday 28th August 2022 (Trinity 11)

Hebrews 13: 1- 8

Luke 14: 1, 7 - 14

'The Lord is my Helper'

Good Morning Everybody - Here, and at Home on Zoom. Welcome!

Let's Pray!

As usual, I'd like to ask what you discovered in these two readings this morning; What pleased you? What challenged you? What questions did these readings raise for you? But, I'd also like to ask if you found any common theme in the two readings? ... Thank you.

So let's have a look first at the Gospel reading - from Luke 14

It's interesting isn't it - there are a lot of eating and mealtime stories in Luke's Gospel - Luke often talks about Jesus' ministry, looking at His life on earth as a journey; - the journey of His life towards His sacrificial death in Jerusalem.

But he also tells us a lot about the ways in which Jesus interacted with people of all types along the way, at the real focal points of their lives - which, of course, were often around food and meal tables.

That is certainly the place at which Jesus frequently seemed to meet and challenge all sorts of people, including some of the deeply entrenched customs and unfair practices of the so-called religious elite, who often implied or proclaimed they were better in God's sight than anyone else.

So, while at first glance, this story appears to be talking about meal time behaviour and etiquette, especially if you want to avoid embarrassment by being upstaged by other, more important, guests. There is also some very wise human advice here about avoiding pride and arrogance - and about thinking that any one of us is actually better than anyone else.

But, in addition, there is a far deeper underlying message about our behaviour in God's sight and about not thinking that we are more important in His kingdom, or have any more right to be there, than anyone else.

v. 11 says it all: Jesus said: 'All who push themselves forward, you see, will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be honoured.'

Jesus is talking about the joy of humility, not puffing ourselves up with airs and graces, or being 'holier than thou'

He's telling us that the humbler we are, the more comfortable we'll be in God's home; which will be heaven!!

He's telling us that, as Christians, we need to be practising that sort of behaviour now and there should be no place in our church family for gossip and backbiting or carping and complaining!

Let's live as if the Kingdom of God is here now; let's make the most of it and enjoy it! Because, in fact, the journey has already begun, we're on the way!

We're all trying to journey together with Jesus towards the place and time where, one day, we'll have the privilege of meeting God, delighting in His glory and worshipping Him face to face.

So now let's move on to our reading - from Hebrews 13.

Chapter 13 is the last part of this wonderful letter - which reads more like a sermon - to early Christians. The letter was initially written to members of the family of the early Christian church; but by the author's own words, the letter was for everyone who accepts God's salvation in Jesus Christ, and who wants to walk with Him in their life.

Hebrews is full of wisdom and encouragement, which is just as valuable to us, as it was to the originally intended recipients, who were most likely second generation Christians, many of whom were experiencing fierce persecution from both the Jews and the Romans at that time.

I love the first couple of verses about hospitality, and pastoral care; During our ministry, we've often been blessed to be able to welcome people to eat, or stay, in our home; from Archbishops to pilgrims we had never met before. It has usually given us real joy, and I'm sure that it's always been more of a blessing to us than to the people we've welcomed - and it is pretty possible there have been some angels along the way too!!

This chapter also addresses all the challenges and issues, which we find as stumbling blocks, to trip over every day as we try to live a better Christian life.

If you open any newspaper (or any online news media), in almost any country in the world today, I guarantee the headlines will be about power, money (and the lack of it), sex (and how to get more of it) and suffering. However, you are quite unlikely to find much at all written about Jesus.

News media are full of these things because, it appears, that's what sells - it's what people want to read and so it increases circulation.

And, what do we find in this closing chapter of this amazing guide to living the Christian life? Yes, power, money, sex and suffering - but also Jesus.

The writer is showing us how faith in Jesus can completely change the focus and direction of our lives and guide us through all the difficult and stormy patches we come across day by day.

This remarkable letter explains how God has guided and led His people right from the early days of Moses, and what's called the 'Old Covenant', which was summarised by the Ten Commandments, right through to the fulfilment of the New Covenant, which was put into effect by the death and resurrection of Jesus; and the hope in His promise of what is to come - eternal life in the New Heaven and new earth - worshipping God face to face, in His Kingdom.

This morning's reading from Hebrews is like a route map, showing us the right Christian ways to live. 'Keep your life free from love of money; be content with what you have, let marriage be honoured by everyone, let the marriage bed be undefiled - that is don't sleep around or commit adultery.'

But what I find even more encouraging is that it highlights to us that Jesus promised: 'I will never, ever, leave you or forsake you'.

v. 6 reminds us 'That's why we can be cheerfully confident, and say: 'The Lord is helping me (In another Translation - The Lord is my helper); I'm not going to be afraid; what can anyone do to me??' And that is beautifully reinforced by the last verse of this reading which affirms: 'Jesus the Messiah, (our friend, our redeemer) is the same yesterday, today and forever' What a wonderful promise and reassurance that is. We may be fickle and faithless at times, we may feel hopeless, but Jesus never changes - He is always the same and His support is always there for us. His love never fails!

Praise God for that! Let's PRAY