

Trinity 12 2020

30 th August Trinity 12	9.30 Holy Communion & 11.00 Holy Communion	Jeremiah 15 vv 15-21 p774 Romans 12 vv 9-21 p 1139 Matthew 16 vv 21-28 p984	SoF 555 Thou Didst Leave Thy 399 My Peace I Give Unto You Psalm 26 54 Brother Let Me Be 205 I Cannot Tell 381 Make Me a Channel
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ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who art always more ready to hear than we are to pray, and art wont to give more than either we desire, or deserve; Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask, but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. *Amen.*

*Let love be without dissimulation.
Love must be sincere.*

Two different translations of the first verse of today's epistle. The first, *Let love be without dissimulation*, is from the King James Version which lies deep within in my heart from years of reading, studying and praying over it. The second, *Love must be sincere*, is from the New International Version, which is what our pew bibles are. They sound quite different, but they mean the same. They are translations of the same Greek text. The Greek word is *αυυπκριτος*, which literarily means *without hypocrisy*. *Love must be sincere*. Hypocrisy is the worst thing that Christians can be accused of. *Let love be without dissimulation*.

The collect speaks of God as being *always more ready to hear than we to pray*. It is a sad truth that God's love for us infinitely exceeds our love for Him. God's love is without dissimulation. The love of God is sincere.

In Psalm 26, the psalmist speaks of the way he seeks to live his life, trusting in God and keeping God's commandments. He delights in worship. He is confident that God will look after him. As Christians, we aspire to be like the psalmist in this psalm – to live by faith, a faith which bears fruit in good works. We aspire to delight in worship. We trust God to look after us.

But I'm uncomfortable with the first verse of this psalm. *Be thou my judge, O Lord, for I have walked innocently*. The psalmist invites God to judge him, to be his Judge. It is very likely that bad people were making false accusations against the psalmist - either formally, as in making false allegations against him before some sort of court, or informally, as in gossip, shredding his reputation in the community. He wanted God to give him justice, to vindicate him, just as we might pray for justice if we were falsely accused of some wrongdoing. But I'm also conscious of Psalm 143²: *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*. God's love is without dissimulation. The love of God is sincere. We just don't measure up to God's standards. The only person, the only human being Whose love is truly without dissimulation, truly sincere, is Jesus. In God's sight, no man living is justified, no woman either. It feels to me dangerous to invite God to judge me as if I deserved His love. Far better, like the publican in the parable Jesus tells in

Luke 18, to say, *God be merciful to me a sinner*. It was, said Jesus, *this man [who] went down to his house justified*, not the Pharisee who boasted to God about how much better he was than most other people.

Only Jesus is truly righteous. Only Jesus truly loves completely without dissimulation and with total sincerity. The rest of Romans 12 spells out in more detail what it means to lead a Christian life, to live like Jesus, to love sincerely.

I don't want to forget about poor Jeremiah. He has tried very hard to be faithful to God. God chose him to be a prophet when he was still very young. In fact, God says that he knew Jeremiah even before he was born, even before he was conceived, as He knows all of us because God is eternal. God gave Jeremiah a very hard task - to proclaim the extremely unpopular message that the people of Israel were very wicked, worshipping false gods, violent, dishonest, unfaithful to God and to one another and indifferent to the needs of the poor, and, because they had rejected God and His Law, they were bringing destruction on themselves and their city. Some listened to Jeremiah and turned from their evil ways, but many, including many of the powerful, refused to listen to the message and persecuted God's messenger. There were times when Jeremiah thought that God had let him down. He, Jeremiah, had been faithful, but nobody was listening to his preaching, false prophets were contradicting and mocking him, and the powers that were wanted to imprison and kill him. I didn't want to leave out Jeremiah because there may well be times when we feel that we have always tried to lead a good life and to do the right thing, but things have happened to us and to the people we love which have made us wonder whether God is really looking after us. Now, Jeremiah isn't without fault. God tells him to repent of what is wrong in his life and God promises to be faithful.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks of where His love will lead Him – to the Cross. Peter can't bear the thought. It is an unbearable thought that anyone should be crucified and yet thousands of people have been crucified over the course of the history of this wicked world. It is more appalling still to think that the only truly good person Who has ever lived suffered such a terrible death. This is indeed love without dissimulation, sincere love. God is faithful, but God's faithfulness does not necessarily assure of us of an easy life any more than Jesus had an easy life – a fulfilled life, yes, a joyful life, certainly, but not necessarily an easy life. In this week's digest, the Archdeacon of Bromley & Bexley wisely points out that Jesus tells us to take up our cross and follow Him. He does not tell us to take up His Cross, nor anybody else's cross, but to take up our cross. We each have our own calling to love without dissimulation. How that will work out in our lives will vary from case to case, from person to person. But we do each have God's call, to love as He loves us.

To live in this way, to love without dissimulation, is worth more to us than the whole world.