

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY; BCP EUCHARIST.

We are warned by our Lord to beware of false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves. In contemporary terms we could say beware of false prophets who come to us in mitres and dog collars but inwardly they are wedded to this world. This warning of Jesus finds an echo in another warning given to us from St Paul in his epistle to the Romans; "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that is good, and acceptable and perfect will of God."

To use another translation, "Do not let yourself be squeezed into the shape dictated by the present age." More and more, the Church are raising up men and women to high office with little theology, intellect and wisdom, and it seems the criteria that makes them attractive is their ability to jump on every single ideology that makes them popular with groups driven by what is termed "woke" agendas. It was sad and indeed worrying to see an article that was printed in response to the New Archbishop of York's first statement after his installation. Setting out his stall which featured sound bites covering all the agendas that are now dictating the lives of Christian and non Christian alike, the writer of the article that responded to it stated solemnly that it had the hallmark and intellect of a twelve year old, both confused and confusing, with no depth, no theology and nothing that could be called orthodox. The frightening thing is that in his capacity and many others like him, he is telling us that this is how we are to think and this is how we are to behave.

To quote St Paul again, he teaches us in his letter to the Galatians that Christ gave himself that he might deliver us from this present evil world. But the thing is about this present evil world is that since the breaking in of the Kingdom through the incarnation and life, death and resurrection of Christ, there is another world of new life available as well, and we are tasked, all of us, but especially our shepherds, to figure out through prayer, wisdom, thought, speech and teaching what is appropriate not for this age, this world, but the new life, the age to come when Christ will be all in all.

The solution is the changing of one's mind; to think through the agendas and the challenges of this present age and pass them through the filter of the age

to come which has already begun with Jesus. It is no good dressing up the seductive ways of the world with its shallow and self centred neo- Marxist, pagan guided environmentalism thinking by using a bit of church talk or God talk and making it look and sound Christian. The path that these people are travelling may seem to be moving forward with purpose and with energy but in relation to the Kingdom and the transforming of one's entire being to that of Christ it is movement in the opposite direction.

One of my professors of theology used to teach that the church cannot avoid the influence of culture and those movements that form culture, but what it must avoid is the danger of wholesale assimilation. "As a servant of the word made flesh the church has a duty to engage positively with culture. However as the kingdom that it serves is not of this world its engagement with culture is necessarily prophetic." Which brings us back to Jesus' warning; a true prophet will speak to this world out of his or her deep connection with the kingdom, not out of his or her deep connection with this world only.

AMEN.