

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY; PBS EUCHARIST.

Commentators on the third Gospel seem to enjoy employing an alliteration of words in their endeavours to capture the essence of what St Luke understood to be the most important aspect of the life and ministry of Jesus. For example the priest and writer John Pridmore uses the triple description of the work of Jesus, as the one who sought out, “the last, the least and the lost.” Similarly, Patrick Whitworth uses the terms, “the loser, the lonely and the lowly,” alongside their opposite group, “the sleek, the successful and the slick.” These descriptions of the saving work of Jesus are summed up in an ancient phrase about St Luke that describes him as “scriba mansuetudinus Christi,” the scribe of the gentleness of Jesus.

St Luke, through his writings about the life and ministry of Jesus shows the reader what God is really like. “What I have said about God is how he acts with us”. This is what Luke is at pains to get over to the reader of his eyewitness work. And we see this wonderful portrait of God in the many parables that Jesus teaches a number of them unique to St Luke’s gospel. In the parables of today’s readings, Jesus tells of those things that are lost, we get a glimpse of the authentic nature of God and a self portrait of the work of Jesus. Straight away we come up against “the sleek, the successful and the slick” in the attitudes of the Pharisees and the Scribes. “They murmured,” we are told, for they did not approve of the company that Jesus kept. In response Jesus educates them in the form of three stories that each has at their heart the measures that God will actually go to, to befriend and bring back into his possession those that the world have rejected and considered lost.

Along with the lost sheep and the lost coin there is of course the pinnacle of the “lost” parables, the Prodigal Son. In these parables Jesus opens up for His hearers the Kingdom of God. He lets them see the heart of the Father and His Father’s care for all his people, especially those who feel they do not deserve it. The Scribes and Pharisees slam the door of heaven in the faces of the lost and are content to leave them lonely and isolated, and what bothers them even more is that what Jesus says lies at the heart of God is exactly what Jesus is putting into action. Jesus only does what he sees the Father doing, for they are one.

And what does Jesus know of God and puts into action? He sees His Father willing to turn a place upside down to find one of his lost children; He sees His Father go out into the wilderness and search for one of his children until it is gathered up on His shoulders and brought home and he sees His Father waiting patiently for His errant and disobedient children to come home so that he can lavish gifts on them. For those who refuse to see, this a cause of scandal but for those who have been found and for those whose hearts are not calloused over with a superior attitude, they witness the angels rejoicing.

AMEN.