

TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A 2020.

Saint Paul takes us back to the person that aided the entrance into the world of sin, of that state of corruption and rebellion against God. Through Adam and his fall into accepting the temptation of wanting to be on a level with God, the human race has suffered ever since. There is a poem that explores sacred scripture from the Syriac Tradition written by the 4th Century poet Ephrem which tells of Paradise and of how Adam came to be in a fallen state. There is a stanza that reads;

God established the tree as Judge, so that if Adam should eat from it, it might show him that rank which he had lost through his pride, and show him as well, that low estate he had acquired, to his torment. Whereas if he should overcome and conquer, it would robe him in glory, and would reveal to him also the nature of shame, so that he might acquire, in his good health, an understanding of sickness.

We have had to deal with the consequences ever since. A diminished rank although being apportioned the pinnacle of creation; torment, shame and sickness of mind, body and soul. But St Paul then reminds us of the purpose of the Second Adam, the work and life and purpose of the Jesus event. The first Adam brought pride and rebellion and shame, but Jesus the second Adam brought healing, restoration and grace. Adam used the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to our destruction, but Jesus used his tree to offer again the opportunity to reclaim our glory and be robed with honour as his sons and daughters and to be healed from the sickness of that which diminishes, our original sickness

Through Adam we are made children of the earth but through Christ we are given the opportunity to become children of Heaven.

And becoming children of heaven happens at Baptism, when we are confronted by our old state and invited to claim our new status in Christ. Listen to some words of the Prayer Book for the Publick Baptism of Infants, "O Merciful God, grant that the Old Adam, in this child may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in him. Amen."

However as all know from our own experience, the burial of the old way of living and the adoption of the new way of living, of living in and for Christ, the distance if you like between the journey between the earthly to the heavenly can be a very challenging process if there is a determination to move forward from the one state to the other.

To aid us in this journey we are given the fullness of God's grace and are signed with the sign of the cross. And it is under this sign that we are not only given a warning of what is to come we have the means and the strength to deal with the challenges when it does come. The Prayer after Baptism puts the challenges and warnings to come in terms of a "fight". The candidate is not to be ashamed of confessing Christ and is commanded to "fight under His banner against sin, the world and the Devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end". The growth and journey toward heaven thanks to Adam and the fall is a battle. Words like, fight, banner, soldier, are indications of what lies ahead for the serious disciple who takes his or her calling seriously.

Look at what Jesus says to his disciples as they set out on their mission. He gives them encouragement in what for them could mean death. And we know that for all but one of the disciples, death of the body was indeed their reward. Jesus also indicates that we must stand bold in this fallen world and declare the authority of Jesus. However this really is a hard calling. We stand for values, and teachings, and a way of living that the world does not understand and has no inclination to understand most of the time. Jeremiah from our first lesson this morning knew all about this, and if ever a glimpse is needed into the kind of life that a servant of God can expect and how it feels to face a hardened, cynical and God rejecting world, then look to Jeremiah. His task of calling his people back to the ways of god in the 6th Century BC and warning them of what would happen if they carried on ignoring God, won him no friends, he was increasingly isolated, and his life was constantly threatened by those who could not bear to hear the truth. Jeremiah is brutally honest about the position God has put him in. God called him, like he called the disciples, like he calls us and there are times like Jeremiah when we curse God for doing so because we know what we need to say to a fallen world, but we also know what kind of response we are going to get back. It is indeed a fight and many

fall by the way side, or despite Baptismal promises never put their heads above the parapet.

But God does not condemn Jeremiah for his fist waving at Him, He knows what we are up against, Jesus knew what His disciples were up against. But we are precious, more precious than the sparrows of the air. Because when we were still in the old world of Adam, our rebellion was meaningless, it just compounded our sinfulness, our fall into death. But now we follow in the steps of Jesus our moments of rebellion especially, if like Jeremiah they flow from our actions of declaring Christ's purpose for the world and we are feeling the sting of the worlds hatred, then it is coming from a place of purpose. Wood that is cut down for the fire is only good when it is burning, wheat when it crushed makes the finest bread. Jesus knows every reason why we should fear making that journey between the old Adam and Himself and yet he tells us not to fear. The world hated Him, it will hate us also, but we are destined for a different world and this will pass and then Christ will stand before the throne and present us to God saying "Father this person did not disown me, even in the most difficult of times, even when he raised his voice in despair, receive him into your Kingdom."

AMEN