

SERMON - 3rd after Trinity - A New Creation



'Therefore we know... !' - Paul is sure of something and is sure that he shares that assurance with others as well. But what is it that leads to this assurance, and what is it that we know as a result? If you remember from a couple of weeks ago, Paul had been talking about the 'Treasure' that God has given to His People, and which is entrusted into 'Earthen Vessels' or 'Jars of Clay'

Paul is sure of this because, having once seen it, he and those like him have fixed their gaze upon it. In their earthly existence - in their 'Jars of Clay' - they are suffering, (and none more so than Paul himself!), but their eyes are fixed, not on the things of this temporal existence, but on things above, which rather oddly Paul describes as being 'Unseen' - or 'Invisible!'. How can you see that which is un-seeable? Is Paul talking nonsense? Well I know I am being a bit perverse with this observation, as we probably all realise straight away that Paul is not talking about 'Seeing' such things with his human sight - through his own eyes, but rather, he is seeing with the eyes of faith and of the spirit! And so of course, he does 'see' the unseeable, which can only be seen through the eyes of the Spirit.

So it is because of what is seen through the eye of Faith that Paul and others are assured that whilst this earthly body is subject to decay and to pain, Paul is assured that there is a part of Paul that, when his earthly body is done away with, there will remain that which, by God's Grace, is eternal and is designed for the life in eternal places. This, Paul assures us, his Readers, is the plan and promise of God Himself who has, as guarantor, placed within us the seal of this eternal promise - His own Holy Spirit!

Which is wonderful and sets up a wonderful conundrum for Paul - where would Paul rather be? Here, on Earth, amongst those of the Christian Community, and where he can proclaim this Eternal Promise to those God opens to hear and to receive this Gospel,...

or is Paul so drawn to that eternal presence with his LORD and Master that he would go there at the drop of the proverbial hat? Obviously he does desire to put off this 'Clay Pot' in favour of that Heavenly Body which is promised to him, and to dwell with His Master! But, say Paul, the result is a glorious tension in his life where he brims over with confidence that wherever Paul is to be found, his driving force and being is to please his LORD! Wherever Paul is he

is there to serve His LORD and his point of view has changed too! Once he saw even God's Christ from a worldly perspective, but now Paul's spiritual sight has taken over and he sees his Christ Jesus as He really is.

But there is another problem now for Paul and others! Whilst their gaze is set on Christ and God, those of the World around them regards them as being 'out of their mind' - which, in some ways, is a valid comment from their perspective! The Christian is no longer limited by what their minds and their eyes can encompass, but we are already no longer of the World in which we find ourselves.

Then, eventually, Paul gets to the nub of the issue. It is a place that Paul always gets to! This is the 'What' of which Paul is assured and is the very core of everything Paul says and does!

Paul tells us, his Readers, that 'We' may well be out of our minds ('beside ourselves') but we are so for God, and that if we are also 'In our right minds' then it is so that we can cogently and clearly testify to that of which we are assured - the very Love of God in Christ!

And how is this most powerfully demonstrated? In that Christ Jesus 'Died for all!' - 'So', says Paul, 'everyone has died!' Jesus did the dying for us all! Although we still will, one day, depart from this present World, Death no longer has dominion over us, for Jesus has destroyed that power that death holds over the unregenerate soul! And further, that since all have died (in Christ) then all are made Alive to God! Paul, earlier on his letter, talks about how both the death and the life of Christ is somehow lived out in our lives in the full view of this World and all who are in it!

And that is the simple yet so profound Gospel message! 'Whilst we were still in our Sin, Christ died for us!' And so, in those who receive this message of the Cross, (which through the eyes of the World is 'Foolishness!'), through His death we are restored to life - our 'Jars of Clay' or as Paul calls it 'This Earthly Tabernacle - tent' are filled with Eternity itself!

Now when Paul says that 'Christ Died for All' he is not preaching a Universal Salvation! The price of that Salvation has been paid in full by Jesus on the Cross, but there is also a requirement for us to give up the 'Old Man' and rely

on God's Mercy - which we may hear more about this evening! - and we call that 'Repentance'

And the result is summed up in those final verses of our reading today. If we do received the message of the Gospel, and come in penitence and faith and plead the death of God's Son as being for us to free us from sin, then, says Paul,

'There is New Creation'

Then 'that which is seen' passes away - the 'Old Self' dies - and in its place is a 'New Self' - a new, fresh, recreated self that lives, not for self, but for Him Who Died that we might be remade in His Image! And for that we should be full of thanks and praise... and take Him at His Word, asking for Him to come and rule in our lives, forgive us through the death and resurrection of His Son on Calvary, and then go and live our lives as fresh, new creations in the light of His Grace towards us, who were sinners, but loved by God!

Then we can really sing...

No. 322 in Hymn Book - Key D with Bm

*I Am a New Creation,
No more in Condemnation,
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.*

*My Heart is Overflowing,
My Love just keeps on Growing,
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.*

*And I will Praise You, Lord,
Yes, I will Praise You, Lord,
And I will Sing of all that You have done.*

*A Joy that knows no limit,
A Lightness in My Spirit
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.*

*And I will Praise You, Lord,
Yes, I will Praise You, Lord,
And I will Sing of all that You have done.*

*A Joy that knows no limit,
A Lightness in My Spirit
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.
Here in the Grace of God, I stand.*