

## **Sermon 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

In today's world of terrorism, war and acts of violence we hear Jesus saying he will be bringing the possibility of division to anyone who follows him. People may have inner peace from their faith but in the world they may suffer for their beliefs. In its way it is also a challenge, what would you be prepared to give up for your faith? Family, friends?

I have not spoken to any Muslim converts, but I have spoken to Messianic Jews who have had to sacrifice personal relationships for their faith. We are reminded once again in the letter to the Hebrews though that our reward is not in this world, we are part of a relay race where past runners are cheering us on and we prepare to hand over the baton to the next generation.

Jesus of course gave up a lot, he tells us his baptism is to come, and that the knowledge of the cross is causing him distress probably both because of the physical pain to go through and also because of the pain of separation from God the Father. What a choice that leaves us. In our

earthly lives the possibility of separation from those we love, possibly the pain of being attacked for our faith or eternal separation from our Father.

When we choose faith we step into a story that has been long established and is full of colourful characters, we each have small, if significant parts to play in that story. Because it's not all about us, we are part of a whole crowd past, present and future.

What is about us is how we live our lives. We have to fight sin continually, it's a bit like fighting the weeds in a garden, especially those hard to eradicate ones like bindweed. Because, like bindweed, our faith can be throttled by continual sin and when it is habitual it is very hard to eradicate. Sins such as gossip, greed, jealousy and elitism are insidious but need to be cut out as they have no place in God's kingdom.

Jesus' sayings in this reading from Luke are not pleasant and gentle, but he is picking up on Micah's picture of family dysfunction as part of

his lament about his contemporaries. As with the reading from Hebrews he continues to put his trust in God and his coming rescue. That rescue has happened in Jesus, who gives us an example of faith and hope for the future. We need to look forward to Jesus, he is where we are given our identity, not in our worldly roles of teacher, father, banker, son, our role is in the family of Christ. It is a large family, united in Jesus, looking outwards to the world around us and God's work we have to do, forwards to the future when our God reigns over all the earth.

Last week I talked of the possibility of us not seeing the rewards of our faith during our time on earth but waiting for the coming of God's kingdom here on earth. Here we are shown the very real possibility that our life on earth may not be comfortable, but what we are asked to do at the end of the reading is to use discernment. We need to use all our senses and learning to discern what is happening both in ourselves and where we might be sinning and where our part in the story of God's people lays.

Because God does have a part for each and everyone of us. It may not always be comfortable or as we planned but he has the big picture and the future in his hands. He loves us, wants us as part of his family and following the example of Jesus.