

## **Sermon for Sunday 11th August 2024**

TRINITY 11

*By Rev Janet Bayly*

### **Ephesians 4: 25 - 5: 2**

*So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labour and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up,[b] as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

### **BEING RIGHT WITH GOD**

I wonder if you have a favourite book - maybe one that someone gave you and that you return to time and again.

This little blue book was recommended to me many years ago by Liz Welters when I was working with her in Waddesdon. It is a book of Collects. Each Sunday we have a collect as part of our service. It is the special prayer of the day. Earlier in the service I read the collect given for today in a different version. Sometimes they tend to be a bit difficult to follow so here is the version from my little blue book which I find much easier to follow.

Merciful God your son came to save us  
And bore our sins on the cross  
May we trust in your mercy  
And know your love  
Rejoicing in the righteousness  
That is ours through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes I can understand pretty well. The prayer begins with attributing to God one of the many titles that we begin our prayers with. Sometimes we start with Our Father as in the Lord's Prayer or Heavenly Father. This prayer captures the nature of God - he is merciful. Two weeks ago Neil who attends Whitchurch church went for selection for ordination. He phoned me this week to say that he had been accepted. I asked him about his experience and he said that it was pretty gruelling with interviews and written work. It reminded me of my selection process. It was three days at Eli and it was generally lovely apart from one interview where I was grilled. I was asked about God the judge and about his anger which floored me. Fortunately I was able to retort that I had known God's mercy and grace. Yes we know that God is a judge but he is not vengeful, he is merciful and ready to forgive us our sins.

So as we look again at this collect we see that God is merciful, and that Jesus came to earth to live a perfect life and to die on the cross so that we can know God's merciful love. The collect then continues - rejoicing in the righteousness that is ours through Jesus Christ. Righteousness is not an every day word so I thought I would google it. It is massive. It embraces being virtuous, upright, decent, honest, moral and good. Wow. If we all lived lives full of those virtues society would be rather different. As Christians we strive for these in our every day lives and we can make a difference.

It made me think about Paul's letter to the church that he founded in Ephesus. He was trying to give people guidance in how to live lives honouring to Christ. So he urged them to speak the truth, to work honestly and share with others, to encourage people, not to be bitter and angry, be kind and forgiving, just as God has forgiven us. So this brings us back to the collect. Read it again.

In our gospel reading, Jesus called himself The bread of life, the bread of heaven, the bread that gives us true life and builds us up to be his disciples and witnesses in the way that we live. As we join together to share the meal that Jesus has given us may we come with thankful hearts seeking to be right with God our merciful father. Amen