

10 Pentecost
August 8, 2009
Fr. Bill McGinty

“A Love that Endures”

David's disobedience to God is played out in his son's bad ways. Today's readings continue a theme we have been following for several weeks now. In the Old Testament story of King David his rebellious son Absalom is killed and the message is clear: "The fruit of sin is death". In Ephesians the Christians are told sin and evil must be replaced in their lives by forgiveness and love. Lastly in the Gospel Jesus explains what he means by "I am the bread of life."

In the Old Testament, the Jews had only vague notion of the concept of eternity or even heaven. Their God has a name that is so sacred that they fear to utter it. Jesus, in the Gospels speaks of a different kind of God. He is a relational God. He calls him Father, implying that he is son and we God's children. Jesus continues to teach using the metaphor of bread. He does so because he is speaking to uneducated people, peasants and farmers, fishermen and servants. So what precisely is Jesus saying?

He is saying that when God reveals himself to us, it is no accident. He means us to hear and respond to him. He wants us to see in a different way. God's revelation is clear in Jesus' teaching.

The Old Testament stories taught that sin brought death, not just physical death, but spiritual death also. Jesus is saying that there is a kind of life and existence that last to for ever, which death cannot touch.

A relationship with Christ and his father elevates us to a new level of existence. We enter into a personal relationship which makes sense of our existence. Imagine spending a week on an island with three total strangers. Now imagine me spending a week on the same island with family. That is the difference in this incitation to a relationship with a God is called father.

Just as food and bread sustains us in life, so Christ and God's word is meant to sustain us spiritually. That is not possible unless we each have a personal relationship with Jesus and God as father.

Knowing how difficult many ordinary people find to pray and speak to God on a daily basis, our father in the Anglican Church gave us the "Book of Common Prayer." So important has our Book of Common Prayer become, that w whole Canon, made up of 8 parts, has been devoted to it in the Canons and Constitution of the Episcopal Church. It has its own officer, the Custodian of the Standards Book of Common Prayer, who is nominated by the House of Bishops and confirmed by the House of Deputies at General Convention, every eight years.

The Book of Common Prayer is a treasury for all who wish and want to call upon God's name and who seek a genuine relationship with him.

I once knew a man who owned a Harley Fat Boy motorcycle. I asked him one day, how he felt about riding the bike through the countryside and enjoying the freedom and exhilaration it gave him.

He told me that he didn't. The motorcycle never came out of the garage. He cleaned it from time to time but in five years he never had time to take it out and ride it.

Our Book of Common Prayer can be like that. It can be a treasure that we never dip into, and rarely utilize. The Book of Common Prayer organizes your prayer for you beginning with Daily Morning prayer on page 75.

Through, reading scripture, the word of God, reciting Psalms and uniting with Christians around the world using the same sacred prayer we build that bridge that sustains our relationship with God. It is difficult to have any relationship with God without prayer. The Book of Common Prayer makes it easy, because it provides the words and allows us to prayer either individually or in groups. Perhaps that is the true beauty of Anglicanism, that it takes what is old, true and tested and uses it to bring people together.

Morning Prayer finishes each day with two Anglican prayers that many see as summing up our life as Anglicans:

Almighty God, Father of mercies.

We your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for your creation preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love, in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ for the means of grace and for the hope of glory.

And we pray, give us such awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts, we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ o our Lord, to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

If that prayer is a total reflection of our Anglican life and mission then the final prayer, short as iut is, is a universal prayer for all Christians wherever they may be.

The prayer of John Chrysostom:

“Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you, and you have promised through your will beloved son that when two or three are gathered together in his name you will be in the midst of them; Fulfill now, oh Lord, our destines and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.

Praying together is the mark of the Christian just as we sign ourselves with the sign of the cross. We all belong to the same salvation, the one Gospel the one mission of Jesus Christ.

Last week I saw an interesting movie about the end of the world, called “Knowing.” In the movie a whole series of prophecies of up coming disasters, come true. They have been written down as n umbers and dates fifty years before, by a 12 year old child,

The final date October 19th 2009 is followed by the letters EE. Everyone else! Everyone else dies on October 19th when the entire earth is consumed by a giant solar flare. There is no escape, no way of surviving, it is the end of everything planet and life as we know it.

The end unites one family; it brings them back together beyond their differences and allows them to die together.

Far from being a sad movie with a downer of an ending it is a movie about hope and new beginning.

Hope and new beginning is what Jesus is offering to all who hear his words:

“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes has eternal life.”

Salvation is about a love that endures beyond the fabric of our years. We know how to do this in the context of family and we often do it well. To be united with God as our Father calls for us to be a worthy member of his family. How can we ever do that better than by serving his son›
Amen+