



## Trinity 13 2021, 8.30am BCP Holy Communion

Last week I spoke about our vocation as ministers of the New Testament. St Paul was inspiring us to go out and be God's love in the world. But what does being part of this new covenant look like? We know it's no longer about circumcising our boys, or tablets of stone, so what is it?

St Paul tells us in today's Epistle. To be worthy of our calling he says, we must 'forebear' with one another in 'love', with 'lowliness' and 'meekness' and 'long suffering'. We must 'endeavor' (actually work *hard!*) to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We must, he goes on, live out our lives as members of the 'One Body' of Christ, alive in the One Holy Spirit. 'One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all'.

Nice words. But living them out is *tough*.

And who are we supposed to be loving in this radical way?

St Paul's mention of Baptism reminds us, as the Prayer Book says after Holy Communion, that we are 'very members incorporate in the mystical body of' Christ. We belong to each other, radically, and truly, with everybody here and every person who will share the Eucharist today across the globe, from Nantwich to Nepal.

And indeed God's love (and with it our belonging) goes even further than that. Christ's Body is not a *club*, it is an *invitation* to the world. Every single person and corner of creation – however bruised, difficult or undeserving – is the one of whom St Paul is saying: 'endeavor' in 'lowliness' and 'meekness' and 'long suffering' and 'forbearance' and 'love'. *That* is the new covenant to which we belong, and of which by baptism we are all ministers.

Jesus is quick (in the parable of the Good Samaritan for example) to tell us it includes the stranger and despised outsider. He tells us elsewhere to include our enemies in our beloved too.

I'm reminded of Martin Luther King's words in his letter 'loving your enemies'. He reminds us that however good retribution or giving up on people may feel to us at the time, it never actually *works*. Jesus tells us in today's Gospel, that the rules that limited the love of the Pharisees are false rules. The rules that gave order and good sense and comfort to many by compartmentalising humanity are lies, Jesus says. Which parts, brothers and sisters, of our lives need to hear that message this week? Where at home, in church or community or work or school or our global family have we (entirely naturally, and we all do it!) fallen short of the words of St Paul and the teachings of Jesus today?

The last words go to someone who knew the importance and cost of discipleship. But before Martin Luther King finishes for us, a little practical help – what can we do? As well as calling to mind those parts of our lives where we have fallen short of our calling, try praying freely and often 'Come Holy Spirit'. Throughout the day, in the street, before or after conversations, during work or family time, ask God to provide what we need to be who we are: children of God, wherever we are. 'Come Holy Spirit' a short, simple and powerful prayer, for use anytime, anywhere, all the time, everywhere.

So, Dr King's 'Loving your enemies':

"To our most bitter opponents we say: 'We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you... Throw us in jail, and we shall still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and we shall still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our community at the midnight hour and beat us and leave us half dead, and we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.'