

St Peter's, Ealing
Sunday 24th July 2022
Trinity 6 (Proper 12) Yr C

Hallowed by your name

Today's reading from Genesis may, on first encounter, seem a little...well, odd. Here is Abraham questioning God's choices and judgements. God has seen the sinfulness of Sodom and Gomorrah and has decided to destroy them. Abraham has the temerity to question God's judgment. He asks if it is right to destroy a whole city just because of the sinful people. What about those who live a sinless life, those who are just in those cities.

This is an important theological question of the time. This Abrahamic story was written by the author to explore the question of God's justice and judgement upon the people of Israel. They had recently been taken into exile in Babylon, around 550 BC and were trying to understand this insight into their relationship with God. Where is God's justice in the destruction of a whole nation who, through the Mosaic Laws and teaching had been promised God's protection and that, being God's people, would be a power amongst all nations. Why was God punishing the good and righteous people alongside the bad and unrighteous in the nation? How could this be divine justice?

Abraham is able to return to his own place and the people are saved because that is not what God does. We have here a just and merciful God whose desire is to love God's people. What God wants is for us to return to him; to turn from the ways of unrighteousness and to follow in the ways of salvation and truth.

If we are unclear about what that is, then Paul, who is writing to the Colossians gives us an insight. In this passage Paul is celebrating the faithfulness of the Christians in Colossae who have committed themselves to the Christ as Jesus the Lord. He reminds them of our salvation revealed in and through this historical person, and in which they gather and worship. Yet Paul is aware of the many pressures and temptations crowding in on these new Christians. How the Hellenistic world with their philosophies and traditions on offer may tempt the Christians of Colossae away from the path of righteousness. Paul is reminding us, through his words to the Colossians, of the full nature of Jesus

Christ in who full deity dwells; that in him we are buried in our baptism and raised to a full life in faith with him, being alive to God and forgiven of our sins that are nailed to the cross. So now we are freed to serve God in love and truth.

We explore and grow in this faith through prayer. The disciples are ready to take the next step in their spiritual journey with Jesus. To do this they ask for the appropriate tools of faith, they ask how to pray, 'Lord teach us to pray.'

Here we are offered a theological framework upon which to build our prayer life. we see at as 'The Lord's Prayer', a single entity standing in itself; yet here we are offered a formula for prayer which begins by acknowledging a new relationship with God. Here we are encouraged to know God on a more intimate footing, we now call God 'Father' whilst recognising the sacredness of God's name. we are encouraged to pray for the coming of God's kingdom, for sustenance to continue to work of God and to acknowledge God as a just and righteous judge who forgives those who are sorry for their sin.

This prayer or prayer formula draws us into an understanding of the nature of God as revealed to us in the person of Jesus. It also echoes the theological proof offered in our Abrahamic allegory and offers us a framework, along with the Christians in Colossae, the guides us along the way of faith, helping us to remain faithful to our Lord and Saviour.

We too are able, as we gather to share in this holy meal of the eucharist, to proclaim a just and loving Father who, through his Son our Saviour Jesus, reveals the truth of God's love for all the world. Through the power of the Holy Spirit our lives are filled with the grace and truth and as the bread and wine are offered and we receive we are renewed to follow in Jesus' way.