

SERMON FOR MAY 12 2024

ST DAVID'S, BURNSIDE

Was the world so different in the time of the apostles? How well did the apostles know the mind of God? How well did the apostles know the mind and life's purpose revealed in Jesus. Of course the world was different in those days when Jesus and his disciples walked the land of Israel and in that case what caught their attention was, I was going to say very different from what catches our attention. But is it so different? The poor you will always have with you. Refugees as then exist today being pushed backwards and forwards by conflict they are powerless to avoid. As in Jesus' day the powerful political masters of today dictate who wins and who loses. We see this in the ludicrous United Nations Security Council where the four victorious nations of the second world war veto anything that doesn't accord with their political purpose despite the voice of the majority. The history of nations revealed in the Old and New Testaments echo the Cain and Abel conflict that resounds in our own time and always will. This is in spite of our common origin for just as Cain and Abel were brothers born of the one mother so is our lineage.

The conflict between Palestinians and Jews it can be argued, is a conflict between siblings for Palestinians and Jews are both semitic races.

“Semitic describes a group of languages — including Hebrew and Arabic — as well as the people who traditionally speak them. Semitic is rooted in the Biblical name Shem, the son of Noah, who is traditionally thought of as the direct ancestor of the Jews and Arabs.”

So, the ability of nations to establish peace throughout the world has proved a failure. We can neither recognise the common ancestry of the human race nor can we escape from the conflict that proves the inadequacy of men and women and children to choose a better way.

Nevertheless the church does speak of a better way. Not because it invented a better way and not because it always exemplifies that better way. But the better way exists because God the Holy Spirit will not be silenced nor will the Spirit of God remain aloof from humanities needs.

Next Sunday is the Feast Day of Pentecost. It is a day when we can take a fresh look at the promise Jesus made to his disciples *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. That is why I said the Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you.”* John 16.12b-15

So, the question we must ask ourselves is whether we know what the Spirit is telling us? Makes me wonder whether it is so difficult to know. The writers of the New Testament suggest to me that it isn't that difficult. How else would they have been able to write what we now read. And that brings me to a little truism I discovered recently. It relates to the truth of the matter. *“Prevent Truth Decay. Brush up on your bible.”* Judith Merrill. *Blunders and Blessings.*

Well, the bible will help us know what the Holy Spirit has done because authors like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John including Paul, Timothy, Peter, Titus, all men of the bible tell us. But here are two women of our own era. Dorothy L Sayers, Maria von Wedemeyer

- wife of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There has to be more women able to help us know what the spirit is telling us so perhaps I should look out amongst the congregation to find women who could if they chose to, write about their experiences of the Holy Spirit. And men in the congregation too.

You see, Jesus has fulfilled his promise amongst us. It may be we haven't looked closer to home as we should. We don't write books but we do write in the life of this church the story of the work of the Holy Spirit in us, through us, and with us now and always. In that sense we too are authors of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The wisdom of children. 'A little boy was watching his father, a pastor, write a sermon. "How do you know what to write?" he asked. "Why God tells me." Replied the father. "Well," countered the son. "Why do you keep crossing things out then?"

Let's not cross things out as frequently as we might do. We may be crossing out what God the Holy Spirit is saying to us.

Fr John
Saturday 11 May 2024