

SERMON FOR PENTECOST B10
28 JULY 2024
ST DAVID'S, BURNSIDE

By all accounts last night's Friday Night Dinner Club was a happy and well fed occasion. Thanks to Anne Sprod for the legs of lamb cooked to perfection by Ann Skinner and her team of helpers. Sue Stephenson again, getting together some Aussie fare for us to enjoy, and what about that iconic 'dunny' produced by David Stephenson to act as a photo booth. Of course there were others working with a common mind to reveal to Margaret and Lyndon something of the available talent of the parish community. It was an earnest display of what we can achieve when we have common purposes. Differences in talent and ingenuity, differences in age and physical strength, differences in personality and differences in an ability to be outlandish in dress and behaviour melt away when we combine to achieve a common purpose.

Similarly, what was achieved last night was in my opinion an example of what can be achieved when a group of people, with common purpose, set out to prove that the Christian life is good and enjoyable and able to achieve more than it knows. As St Paul has already told us this morning - with God's power in us we can accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine.

There are of course a variety of sermons or addresses to congregations. Some are for teaching the meaning of scripture, others are for exhortation, still others are to inspire spiritual growth amongst the followers of Jesus. We have shared these together. The preacher in preparation of a sermon listens, as it were, to the voice within his or her head. A voice, one must hope, is inextricably linked to a commitment to preach the good news of Jesus. It's an inner voice one might claim to be the voice of the Holy Spirit, revealing the truths of the gospel for the benefit of listeners.

You will remember the funny story I told a while ago about the child who asked their father how he knew what to write for the Sunday sermon. "I ask God what to write and he tells me." The child then asks, "Why do you do so much crossing out then?" It has to be said surely that knowingly or unknowingly we often do the same. We ask God and we hear what he tells us, usually from a passage of scripture, and then in a variety of ways we cross out what we have heard. I suggest we all do it. The inner voice of the Holy Spirit speaks to us and we discount what we are told.

What will we do this morning?

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father..." says Paul. To discover **this** reason we go to previous passages in Paul's letter to find that Paul is exhorting the Ephesian Gentiles to consider their commonality, under God the Father, with the Jewish population of Ephesus. *"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."* Ephesians 1.13

Paul earnestly exhorts the Gentiles to comprehend what is the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love that in turn will lead them to be filled with the fullness of God. I hope you can feel in Paul's words evidence of his knowledge and passion, for others to know what he has come to know.

I have on several occasions over time advised those who read our Sunday passages of scripture to read Paul's letters to us as if they were themselves St Paul. This is in order to capture and thereby

express Paul's earnest exhortation for us to listen to what he has to say with an awareness he is speaking to us.

At the beginning of this sermon I praised the involvement of many, some I dared to name, who when combined with the many who were able to commit to attend Friday evening's dinner achieved a memorable occasion. And it will be remembered!

We were, together, able to achieve our common purpose - that is, to welcome our new rectory family - but also to reveal what and who we are. To reveal that when we commit ourselves to a common purpose and in spite of our differences we can achieve more than we are perhaps prepared to admit, at the beginning.

This beginning, this new common purpose we grasp onto most dearly because in Christ and filled with the fullness of God we will live the Christian life.

Fr John