

2023-10-15 ... 10am Holy Communion Sermon ... Revd Sue Armstrong
Exodus 32: 1 – 14; Philippians 4: 1 – 9; Matthew 22: 1 – 14

“May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Amen.”

Today’s reading from Philippians helped me to realise what a change had taken place:

Paul is reminding the young church in Philippi – the first church he set up in Europe – and one that was always rather special to him, about the importance of remaining true to their belief. Of staying on the path set before them and of course this is relevant to us also.

Despite the real temptations offered by the world, money, power, false gods; anything that gets between us and our love for God and our efforts to live in a Christ-like way; Paul is offering words of encouragement.

He is encouraging the New Church – his words are also there for us. A reminder of what has been achieved, and a help to remain steadfast whatever the opposition.

This is a wiser – in the way of relating to people – Paul who is dealing with the approaching end of his life. His experiences have mellowed his attitude to life. He acknowledges the work done in spreading the Gospel by the two previously unknown women, Euodia and Syntyche (Philippi had a tradition of women taking an important part in the running of things) and urges them to reconcile their differences which could well damage the infant church.

The idea of Paul openly acknowledging the contribution of women to the church really shows this change in him.

Although less dogmatic in his approach to people, Paul’s faith and the strength of his love for Christ have grown ever stronger as has his desire to live his life following the model of Christ.

What a wonderful example he sets us, adversity has not diminished his desire to spread the Good News, it only confirms in him the importance of Jesus’ message.

His guidance and encouragement for the New Church is just as relevant today as when he wrote his letters in 1st Century. He reminds us how important it is to make the decision to follow Christ and to commit to that.

Paul reminds us how support from the members of the congregation helps to meet that commitment – this has particular importance in parishes where there are Lay leaders working – he emphasises how joining together in worship, praise and fellowship helps reinforce that.

So Paul’s message today is full of encouragement; he stresses the importance of regular worship, praise, fellowship and above all that commitment to following the road which leads to Christ whatever the obstacles. That, he believes is what is asked of us as followers of Christ.

That is what we are to go and do.
Amen.