

The “heart” of a disciple of Christ

James 2. 1-10, (11-13), 14-17
Matthew 7.24-37, esp. 37

SPRINGLINE PARISH - SUNDAY TRINITY 15 B 2018 – SERMON NOTES

Yesterday I gave a talk for the Men’s Breakfast at Glenthams. I told them: “I’ll share my story but actually each of you have a story as well.” I believe we all have heard of the classic ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ written by John Bunyan.

We too are like Christian the protagonist in the story, we are travelling from this world to the next world. But we pass through trials and difficulties like him.

Like in the allegory, “*as night falls, Christian enters the fearful Valley of the Shadow of Death. When he is in the middle of the Valley amidst the gloom, terror and demons, he hears the words of the Twenty-third Psalm, spoken possibly by his friend Faithful:*

Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4.)

As he leaves this valley the sun rises on a new day.”

We too pass through the valleys of the shadow of trials and crises, but basically we find our strength in God, the Good Shepherd, and each one of us has to discover his/her path to live this life and to return to God from whom we came. (Wikipedia)

Today We have some excellent lessons from James about what it really means to follow Christ and to have the “heart of Christ”. He doesn’t mince words at all and is clear and precise as what is expected of a disciple of Christ, namely us “Christians”.

The Kingdom is for all *those who love God and believe in Him*, those who are “rich in faith” (2.5)

The writer of the epistle, James, says that the rich are, quite often, wicked and yet we honour them! (2. 6-7)

The *law of “love of neighbour”* is one of the two commandments that God gave us for the basis of human social and spiritual living. (2.8)

The disciple of Christ *doesn’t, or shouldn’t, make distinctions* among people (2.4)

Showing partiality is not a sign of a person who has the “heart” of a disciple of Christ. (2.9)

James also gives important words of *warning about judging others without mercy*. Again such an attitude is totally contrary to the “heart of Christ” that a disciple is supposed to demonstrate. (2.13)

The example of a brother or sister in need must evoke concrete response from a follower of Christ. (2.15-16)

What do we do when we see the poor, the homeless? Mother Teresa was so full of Christ she saw Jesus in the poor and treated them as if they were Jesus himself.

“Faith without good works is dead” – classic words of James! What is the use? (2.14,16) *A true “disciple” of Christ is a person of faith and action.*

“Whatever you do to the least of your brethren, you do it to me”
(Mt 25.40)

The great discovery of Mother Teresa of Calcutta to which she dedicated all her life is based on these words of Jesus.

So many stories of faith!

“I searched my God and I did not find him
I searched my soul and I could not see it;
I searched my brother and I found all three!”

The gospel also of today further confirms for us the absolute need of having the “heart” of Christ if we wish to be his true followers. (Cf Mark 7. 24-37)

He “*went about doing good*” as we read in the Acts of the Apostles. That is exactly what we too are called to be and to do!

But we can do that only if we have the heart of Christ. Every time we celebrate Holy Communion we have the opportunity to be fed by God’s word and by his body and blood in the bread and wine. Let us spend a moment or two just to consider in our hearts our life as Christians, followers of Jesus Christ listen to His Holy Spirit whispering in our hearts!

[ST Mattapally]