

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
14th June 2022

READINGS

Look, what good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. Is this what I want—this doing of penance and bowing like reeds in the wind, putting on sackcloth and covering yourselves with ashes? Is this what you call fasting?

No, the kind of fast I want is that you stop oppressing those who work for you and treat them fairly and give them what they earn.

I want you to share your food with the hungry and bring right into your own homes those who are helpless, poor, and destitute. Clothe those who are cold, and don't hide from relatives who need your help.

If you do these things, God will shed his own glorious light upon you. He will heal you; your godliness will lead you forward, goodness will be a shield before you, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind.

Isaiah 58:4-8 (The Living Bible Translation)

When the Pharisees heard how he had bested the Sadducees, they gathered their forces for an assault. One of their religion scholars spoke for them, posing a question they hoped would show him up: "Teacher, which command in God's Law is the most important?"

Jesus said, "'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.' This is the most important, the first on any list. But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

Matthew 22:34-40 (The Message Translation)

Dear friends, do you think you'll get anywhere in this if you learn all the right words but never do anything? Does merely talking about faith indicate that a person really has it? For instance, you come upon an old friend dressed in rags and half-starved and say, "Good morning, friend! Be clothed in Christ! Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" and walk off without providing so much as a coat or a cup of soup—where does that get you? Isn't it obvious that God-talk without God-acts is outrageous nonsense?

I can already hear one of you agreeing by saying, "Sounds good. You take care of the faith department, I'll handle the works department."

Not so fast. You can no more show me your works apart from your faith than I can show you my faith apart from my works. Faith and works, works and faith, fit together hand in glove.

James 2:14-18 (The Message Translation)

REFLECTION

Some of you may have heard of Dr. Albert Schweitzer. A brilliant scholar, Schweitzer studied philosophy and theology at the University of Strasburg and was awarded his doctorate in 1899. The son of a Lutheran minister, Schweitzer went on to lecture in Philosophy at the University. He also became a preacher within the Lutheran Church. Schweitzer was also an accomplished musician with a particular skill on the organ. He became one of the leading experts of his time on the works of Bach.

In 1905 Schweitzer announced his intention to become a mission doctor in order to devote himself to philanthropic work. In 1913 he became a Doctor of Medicine. With his wife, Hélène Bresslau, who had trained as a nurse in order to assist him, he set out for Lambaréné in the Gabon province of French Equatorial Africa. There, on the banks of the Ogooué River, Schweitzer, with the help of the local people, built his hospital, which he equipped and maintained from his income, later supplemented by gifts from individuals and foundations in many countries.

One evening, as one of the nurses was preparing to leave, Schweitzer stood to give a farewell address at a gathering of staff and patients to bid her goodbye.

"Before you go," Schweitzer said, "I want to recall an incident that happened several months ago. One night, you took a sick baby into your own bedroom so that you could care for it even as you slept. All through the night I heard cries coming from your room. And you getting up to care for the child. Finally, in the wee hours of the morning, the tone in the baby's cry changed. Immediately I knew that the fever had broken, and that the child would get better. I'm supposed to be something of a musician, but I want you to know that was the most beautiful music I've ever heard."

Schweitzer sought for excellence as a musician, but he also sought for excellence in loving human beings, in the service of Christ.

In our readings this week, we are reminded that that faith is more than something we believe, it is something that we do. Faith that is not lived out in action is not of much merit. To claim the love of Christ in our lives, is to answer a call to living in a loving way within our community, around our neighbours and family and with all who we meet. Living faith is never just all about 'me', it is about meeting the needs in others around us too. And any community where there are Christians should therefore be a better community and better place to be, because of the way the people of God live in that place.

Ask yourself this week, how you can live out faith in action. How you can put into practice what you ask for in your prayers and how you can bear witness with your lives as well as with your words.

Amen

PRAYER

God Almighty
Lord of heaven and of earth.
You have never been one to keep at a distance.
Always you have been the God who is with us,
The God who meets us in our need with love,
The God who makes a difference.
We see that ultimately on the cross,
The son giving all to save us from sin's consequence.

God hear the prayers we offer for ourselves.

God, you call us to bear witness to you,
To be like you in care.
To respond to need by giving ourselves.
Show us where the need is around us
Inspire us with creativity and equip us with resolve,
To meet the needs and make a difference,
So that all might know the blessing of the Lord in their lives.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

