

“Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.”

The readings today for your perusal are Psalm 85: 8-13, Romans 10: 5 -15 and Matthew 14: 22-33.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

If we find ourselves experiencing troubles we are not to be afraid instead our reaction should always include self-examination lest there is sin to be confessed and wrong to be righted that is why the Psalmist says: *“Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people.”* By saying he will listen, or I am listening the Psalmist is committing himself to doing God’s work by living his life by following God’s teachings. This means that everyone who desires revival or renewal in their troubled life in and through the grace, mercy and love of God must wait upon his word. This means that we have a responsibility: 1 to respond to his love, 2 to forsake the follies of the past and 3 to live in fear of God in other words we live our lives in such a way that we do not want to let Him down. If we do that then we will experience God in all his glory because God will come among his people through the power and presence of his Holy Spirit. *“He promises peace to us, his own people, if we do not go back to our foolish ways. Surely, he is ready to save those who honour him, and his saving presence will remain in our land.”*

Throughout the Bible we find the reassuring message time after time that God’s nature doesn’t change unlike us, all of God’s characteristics or attributes are in harmony: he loves us without any adjustment of his ‘truth’ as the Bible teaches us God’s *“Love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will embrace.”* God extends his peace to us his children without compromising his righteousness, because our God is an all loving God, who wants what is best for us and his creation. It is through his righteousness that all will be restored, mankind will

be saved by the word of God, his truth will march on and people will be saved and harmony and balance will be restored to God's creation.

Salvation is for everyone, not just for a few special people. That is the beauty of the Gospel message; salvation is there for everyone, for all people regardless of who or what they are, and it is this that Paul addresses in his letter to the early Christians in Rome. Specifically, he is reminding the Romans and the modern day reader that the Jewish people had received a covenant at Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the Law and the Jewish people would have received or understood righteousness by obeying those laws. But Paul is telling us all that it is only through Christ Jesus that salvation can be found as he is the fulfilment of the Law. Verses 6&7 is telling us that we do not require heroic deeds to attain salvation, by bringing Christ down from heaven or up from the grave, all that is required is faith.

“What it says is this: “God’s message is near you, on your lips and in your heart” – that is the message of faith that we preach.” Paul has taken the word of God from the OT meaning and understanding of the law which is kept back for a special few people i.e. the Jewish people themselves, and has brought our attention to the word of God in the Gospel message – here it is the word of faith, which is open to all and is accessible to all, and it is not kept back for a special few like the Law of Moses was. Paul is teaching us that righteousness is gained by faith, not by deeds or actions or works but it is readily available to anyone who will receive it freely from God through Christ.

Next we come to one of the early Christian confessions of faith, where Paul tells us quite clearly *“If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that God raised him from death, you will be saved. For it is by our faith that we are put right with God; it is by our confession that we are saved.”* Here is the bedrock of Christian faith, we must believe in our heart and admit it out loud with our mouths that Christ is not only Lord and Saviour

but is alive and reigns on high in heaven. Salvation involves an inward belief (with the heart) as well as an outward confession (with the mouth).

The good news is that we, that is everyone, are all included in this, both the Jews and the Gentiles or non-Jewish peoples of the world. We are all on the same footing when it comes to salvation; it is open to everyone as I have previously said. *“This includes everyone, because there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles; God is the same Lord of all and richly blesses all who call to him.”* Yet we know that there are people out there in our community who do not believe, maybe this is because they have never had the opportunity to hear the Gospel message of salvation. After all there are many families who have never been inside a church except for a baptism, wedding or funeral. If you go to these services it is quite plain who the non-church goers are, because they don’t have a clue as to how to behave or respond. Paul addresses this problem by means of a series of rhetorical questions, he states in reverse order the conditions necessary to call on Christ and be saved: we need a preacher sent from God, and then we need to proclaim the message so that the people can hear the message and finally with them believing the message. That is why Paul finishes by saying *“How wonderful is the coming of messengers who bring good news!”* This quotation that finishes the reading from the book of Romans today is taken from Isaiah 52:7 which refers to those who bring the exiles the good news of their imminent release from captivity in Babylon and like the captives it is applied to all those people who live in sin with the emphasis being placed on the gospel preachers, who bring them the good news that they have a way of being released from their own captivity to sin in and through belief in Christ Jesus.

The Bible teaches us that we must have a solid belief in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour if we are to be saved. It is like Peter seeing Jesus walking on the water and saying to him *“Lord, if it is really you, order me to come out on the water to you.”* It

shows an immediate belief in Christ but much like life, and for many people, who come to faith, fail at the first hurdle that seriously tempts their faith and so like Peter who doubted they find themselves sinking beneath the waves. Peter appears in the Gospels as an impulsive character, prone to ill-considered reactions, but here in the Gospel reading today we find that it was a genuine act of faith by Peter because Jesus answered him and told him “*Come*”, even though it was not sufficient to survive the crisis he faced, for when he noticed the wind and the waves around him his faith faltered and he started to sink and had to cry out “*Save me Lord!...At once Jesus reached out and grabbed hold of him and said, “How little faith you have! Why did you doubt?”*”

As Christians, we are called to spread the word of God and are required to live according to the word of God. Our faith needs to be strong to survive the trials of life and we must keep our eyes firmly focused on Christ and not be distracted by the winds and waves of sin that threaten to drown us in this modern world. So like the words of the hymn “Be Bold, be Strong for the Lord your God is with you!”

PRAYER

Save me Lord, help me Lord is the cry that goes out to you today from many people’s lips. They find themselves tossed about on the winds and waves of life and are being flooded by all their worries and woes, but through faith we know you hear our prayers and so today Lord we pray in Jesus name for you to save those whom we know today who are struggling. We give them over to your eternal care and leave them with you. Yet at the same time Lord we ask you to give us the strength, the courage, and the wisdom to help them in your name. For we know Lord that we are your vessels here on earth to help others, all we ask is that you guide us and help us carry out your work here on earth.

This weekend we pray for all those who have been placed back into lockdown because of the selfishness of a few, we pray Lord that you will strengthen them as they face this renewed hardship, help them focus on you and on your healing today and grant them your peace. At the same time we pray for wisdom for all those around us and especially for those who are in power and authority, help them make the correct and wise decisions so that we as a country and a people can move forward and overcome the hardships and fear of Coronavirus.

If we have faith we will remain strong, but we pray for those who are weak in faith or who have no faith today and ask you Lord to send the Holy Spirit to speak to their hearts and minds and help them hear your message of hope so that they can find your peace as we do today, who believe and accept you and who confess you in our hearts and with our lips that you are Lord and Saviour.

Bless all those in the emergency services, all the key workers and bring them your peace. For those who are heartbroken today heal them we pray and grant them your peace. We especially remember in our prayers today the people of Beirut and those throughout Africa and Asia who are suffering through famine and drought as well as acts of terror bring them your peace we pray and keep them safe. For the people of Beirut help them get the aid that they need to recover from this horrible accident and let the countries of the world show leadership so that peace can reign in that troubled land, all this we pray in Jesus name.

Finally, today Lord we pray for all the teachers, the parents and the pupils who are all returning to school this week. Many are anxious and afraid, grant them your peace, help the teachers and other school staff reassure the pupils and their parents and guide them all so that they can learn and grow and flourish. **Amen.**