

How I love today's psalm - psalm 139 - it is one of my favourites.

What I love most about it, is the childlike way the psalter expresses total acceptance and surrender to God his creator.

O lord, you have searched me out and known me; you know my sitting down and my rising up For you yourself created my inmost parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

How beautiful is the language that expresses this very personal encounter.

The reading from Samuel also tells a story of encounter.

It is the story of how a very young Samuel who is being mentored and led by the holy man Eli, comes to know God by learning to recognise God's call and revelation. *Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening."*

And in the reading from 2 Corinthians, we encounter the apostle Paul, who asks us to remember our position as ministers in the new creation in Christ. Using the metaphor of clay jars to describe how fragile we are under our own steam, Paul compares this with the treasure of God who empowers us in the Holy Spirit to overcome hardships. *We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, struck down but not destroyed....for while we live in Jesus we illustrate his dying for us, by overcoming adversity in our new life in him.* Paul's words talk to us about our strength in the Holy Spirit in our new life in Christ and in the gospel story this morning we hear the difference between our new life and the old way of the law.

To put the gospel story in context. Jesus had not long begun his public ministry by the Sea of Galilee. He had just called Matthew the tax collector to follow him, and then as the story goes, Jesus ate with Matthew and his fellow tax collectors. Immediately Jesus came under the scrutiny of the religious leaders of the day and he was criticised by them –*why does he eat with tax collectors- what's this man all about.*

Things were off to a rocky start for Jesus and this was compounded by the next events in our gospel reading: Jesus disciples picking grain to eat on the Sabbath and then later that same day, Jesus healing the man with the withered hand in the Synagogue.

It is, however, in the Synagogue before he heals the man that Jesus calls his opponents to account with the critical question; *is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save a life or to kill.*

The question goes unanswered, and Jesus shows his uncompromising stance, when in front of the Pharisees he heals the man with the withered hand.

For Jesus, no laws or habitual patterns can be imposed to regulate his practice of justice. Jesus shows clearly in the Synagogue that day, that he is committed to a life of doing good works on behalf of those who continue to suffer injustice and oppression.

His opponents however show an unyielding determination to preserve their world and the power and privilege they possess as its guardians, and the Pharisees join forces with the Herodians to plot Jesus destruction.

In the readings today we hear much about the beauty of our relational oneness in God- particularly in the Psalm and the reading from Samuel, and in the Epistle and the Gospel how God in the Incarnation is always at work in the creation.

The gospel reading details something of what this means in real terms for us as followers of Christ. The story reminds us that we are to be conscious of our divine responsibilities as the new creation, and be open to the leading of the Spirit to overcome injustice both in the oppressed people of the world, and in the destruction of the natural world.

The way of the religious leaders in Jesus time, shows us that their observance of the law came before all else, even a compassionate response to one of their own in need.

Such limited vision, reminds us that we are not just to see **our** Christian life as a series of rote doctrines, observances and obligations that preserve a comfortable way of faith belief that keeps under control our own practice of justice.

Such a view leads to a static Christianity that resists our compassionate response to each other and the genuine stewardship of the earth that we are called into through Christ in the power of the Spirit.

It is my prayer for us all that we may we seek to continue to be in touch with our divine responsibilities in our newness in Christ in the power of the Spirit.

The Lord be with you.