

In the readings today, we hear something about the way of relationship between God and his messenger and we hear something of the movement, the shift from the old covenant to the new.

In the reading from Jerimiah there is the story about his beginnings as a prophet.

Jeremiah is set aside by God for his prophetic mission but, or, should we say naturally, he is a little apprehensive about this calling. He justifies his apprehension by pointing out that he is only a young man without any authority. Who's going to listen to one so young, he says to God?

Now if we remember Moses had a similar reaction when Yahweh sent him as his messenger. Moses told God that he couldn't go on the mission, because he had a speech impediment. In today's reading Yahweh's answer to Jerimiah clarifies the set up between them. It is indeed Yahweh who is the one responsible for what has to be said - not the messenger. Yahweh provides the message and intimately sustains his messenger.

Yahweh touches Jerimiah's mouth - an action that symbolises the placement of words in the prophet's mouth.

The gospel story today takes place in the synagogue where Jesus notices a woman who is bent over, quite unable to stand up straight. He calls her to himself and he straightens her up - he heals her. In the synagogue, however, there is trouble because there is a power system at work here. The synagogue president is in charge, and is upstaged by Jesus for all eyes are on him. His touch and his word, heal the woman.

The president expresses his anger in an official public rebuke, - *the Sabbath isn't the time for healing you should come on other days for that*. Jesus responds to the president by pointing out the double standards; *if you loose animals on the Sabbath, why I can't loose a human being* – the Sabbath's purpose, as Jesus sees it is fulfilled not by forbidding works of compassion but by encouraging them.

Jesus expounds the fact that the Jewish religious heritage is not restricted to the healthy or to males. The woman in the story is a daughter of Abraham and belongs to the reconstituted Israel. In this passage, Luke shows the fullness of God's kingdom revealed in Jesus.

Theologian Tom Wright, observes that what Jesus does for this woman is what he is longing to do for Israel as a whole. The enemy, the accuser, has had Israel in its power these many years, and Jesus and his kingdom-message is the one thing that can free her. But, writes Tom Wright, Israel's insistence on tight boundaries, including the rigid application of the Sabbath law, is preventing it happening.<sup>1</sup>

In the epistle today, the author highlights the contrast between the assembly of Israel when the old covenant was made and that of those who have entered into the new: according to Hebrews, the first took place on earth, and the assembly of the people of the new covenant is convened in heaven. The author speaks about those still on the journey and how there

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright. *Luke for Everyone*, SPCK, London: 2011. p167.

will be greater adversity for those who reject God's warning from heaven, than for those who rejected his warning given on earth, at Sinai.

So where does all fit with us in the modern world of 2019. Well I believe the story of the people of God, skips along down through the millennia and what we see is how God relates to humanity and how humanity responds to God - together one with the other. And in this relationship some things never change.

For example - I believe the love of God for humanity has never changed. What we witness in the cross of Christ is the culmination of that love rising to the glory of completion and newness in the resurrection.

As people of the new covenant we too – like those of old - are loved before we are formed in the womb. Paul writes about this in his letters to the Romans, Ephesians and Colossians. Julian of Norwich mystic of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century saw God's love for us in a vision and she wrote: *I saw clearly that there was no beginning of God's love for us - it was always there from without beginning..... We were made for love.*

And like those prophets of old we too are called by God – and we too can make excuses why we can't respond positively. Yet when we do respond as Christ's messenger in the world, we don't have to feel that it is all down to us – that we have to go it alone - for we will be led by the one who calls us, as the prophets of old were.

And here we recall Jesus words in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. "Don't worry about what you will say or how you will say it. For I will give you a mouth of wisdom. It will not be you speaking – It will be the Holy Spirit speaking and your adversaries shall not be able to resist or gainsay."

So as people who are loved from before the beginning, and accompanied along the way, we are called first to be centred in the one who loves us and calls us– and that means we are called to live in, and depend upon our prayerful relationship with God so that we can hear that still small voice of the Holy Spirit leading us.

In whatever direction our desire takes us – in whatever cause - we are called to respond to it in a God centred way before all else – before taking action. And we see in the gospel story how things can become foggy - when we skip over this imperative. The president of the synagogue was blinded from seeing the way of the kingdom that stood before him by his ego and sense of power.

In Christ, our faith belief is that we are all called by God to be Christ's body in the world. To live out our faith not just in formal worship but in a way of life that is reverent and in awe of God through love in relationship. We are all given gifts that although different, come together as one in him.

We are the body of Christ and his spirit is with us, in this reality we live in trust.

The Lord be with you.