



Sunday, 5 August 2018 – Trinity 10
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Readings: Ephesians 4:1-16, Gospel St John 6:24-25
Focusing on Christian personality attributes
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

I said in the introduction to this service that my sermon would feature personalities. We all have our own particular personality traits. In offices, it is common for line managers to encourage staff to take a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality test or similar assessment. If you don't know what those are, free tests are available online and according to the answers you give – you need to be honest - your personality is classified identifying both good and bad traits. These tests are absolutely fascinating as they are adroitly accurate. The benefit of course, is that if you know what your weaknesses are you can do something positive to prevent your personality's worst excesses. Now, before you think I'm a sales agent for Myers-Briggs, what has this got to do with today's bible readings?

In the Epistle Paul gives a list of Christian personality attributes: humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance, love, unity, peace. It would be good to claim that we possess all of these attributes faultlessly but we all know that when something winds us up, there's room for improvement. We could say that these are merely social graces, so what's Paul really driving at in a Christian context?

Let's look at this way. If you are a member of an association, club or society it's likely to have rules. Members are expected to observe the rules for the benefit of harmonious relationships and the objects of the society. If, however, members, feel that rules are made to be broken then they discredit themselves and hinder the aims of the society.

By association, if we want to be disciples of Christ, it's only fair that we subscribe to all of the Christian personality attributes, they're not optional. If we want to be strong in faith for ourselves and the Church of which we are members, the more effort we put in to prevent our worst excesses, the more strength we will receive and achieve unity of hearts and minds to give honour to God. Exchanging the Peace at every service is an outward sign of that unity.

The Peace could be described as oneness. Being at one with God and being at one with each other. Yes, we might have had a disagreement over something or are just plain fatigued hearing another's grumbles but all of that is put aside and forgiven in the spirit of loving-kindness. Just as Christ, who is our peace, is forgiving, loving and generous.

We learn from the Gospel that Jesus knows the crowd following him is fickle. He fed the 5,000 and now they're back for more. Gently, humbly, patiently and with much forbearance, he gives them phrases to cling on to, so that in the fullness of time, they

will remember them and make links with his whole ministry, mission and miracles and, ultimately, his redeeming love.

Jesus gives them this phrase to mull over:

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

We are familiar with this phrase but let's analyse it a little more deeply. Jesus says he is the 'Bread of Life' but what kind of life is that? This is more than keeping body and soul together for mere existence. This is life in all its fulness in relationship with God, through Jesus Christ. A relationship built on forgiveness, obedience, love and trust. That is why we will never hunger or thirst because in God we have peace, which satisfies all our human cravings be they: addiction, consumerism; depression, loneliness or the hunger of the restless soul.

Being held in Christ's peace removes all human competitiveness to be bigger or better than another, for he is greater. It is enough to understand that he loved us so much that he came to live like us, died, rose again and ascended to his Father, so that through him we have a gateway to heaven. Such is the peace of God that passes all understanding.

God's peace. What more do we need? **Amen**