



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 9 October 2022 – Trinity 17
Readings: 2 Timothy 2: 8-15, St Luke 17:11-19
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Truth v Fiction

We all have moments in our lives when someone challenges principles that we know in our heart of hearts, are true. Timothy is suffering a setback, as he leads the early church in Ephesus. He had been sharing the gospel good news building up the church and then, bam! Some had started to infiltrate the church spreading a false doctrine that denied Christ's absolute divinity, as also claiming higher spiritual insight. Timothy knew that these claims were heretical and sought Paul's views as to how to deal with the matter. We have Paul's responses in his letters to Timothy and the extract we heard this morning hints at the backstory. Paul is unequivocal in his response, "Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David - that is my gospel!" In other words, ignore the doctrines being promulgated by others this is the basis of our faith and, says Paul "Even if we are faithless, Christ, remains faithful for he cannot deny himself." Paul presses his point home, telling Timothy to remind the infiltrators of this, and warn them, before God, that they are to avoid wrangling over words: stern stuff!

Christ v Evil

Our world, however, is little different with many influencers crowding the scene on every subject under the sun, including invented faiths. The overload of information, particularly over the Internet, causes people, especially the young in our society, to be undermined in their moral and spiritual choices. Those who are enticed to try alternative spiritual experiences find that they are anything but liberating, as they struggle to discern truth from fiction: what is of God and what is evil. Some fall into debt buying spells and curses; yet others are incited to commit serious crimes believing enlightenment will follow; others suffer mental health issues and, tragically, at times some resort to suicide. Paul's response to Timothy is still true today; as Christians, we need to help people connect with Christ, for he is the only reality.

Thankfulness v gracelessness

Turning to the well-known gospel account of the ten lepers healed by Jesus, how does it connect with Paul's letter to Timothy? Sadly, even established religion can block access to Christ. Jesus says to the ten men, "Go and show yourselves to the priests": as they went, they were healed. In those days it was not medics but priests that had the say on whether a person was cured, for an illness was deemed to have been caused because of the person's sinful misdeeds. To be granted freedom to re-enter society and public worship, the priests declared if religious purity had been regained. Have you ever wondered what sort of lives

the former lepers experienced after their healing? Only one stopped in his tracks and returned to give thanks to Jesus. The thankless nine rushed on eager to prove to the priests that they were cured and ready to resume, most likely, the thankless tasks of the daily grind. Then, able to resume worship in the synagogues they probably continued to follow their ancestral traditions. Their hearts appear not to have been touched with thankfulness so, their faith, may well have rooted them in the past. The one thankful man doubtless also returned to routine tasks; however, his heart had been touched by God's spirit. He bowed down to Jesus recognising that divine intervention had cured him. When Jesus said to him "Go on your way, your faith has made you well" the verb 'made well,' can also be translated as 'saved'. Perhaps, the routine tasks of life for him were lighter knowing that God's grace had brought not just physical healing but spiritual transformation or, as St Paul phrased it '... salvation that is in Christ Jesus.'

Confidence v Challenge

What's in this for us today? When we have those days that drag us down, faith does not remove the challenges but faith in Christ enables us to face the challenges and push through having hope in God's mercy and grace. St Paul certainly bore witness to this: though chained up in his prison cell for his faith yet, the Spirit of God enabled him to encourage and support Timothy and countless others with wisdom formed over decades from following Christ faithfully. Despite the odds, hearts can sing with spiritual confidence radiating the light of Christ.

To close I offer a pray for us all in the words of today's alternative Collect, as it sums up succinctly all that I have been attempting to convey:

Gracious God, you call us to fullness of life:
deliver us from unbelief and banish our anxieties
with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.