

TRINITY 5 – 2021

Ezek 2:2-5

2Cor 12:7-10

Mk 6:1-6

When CS Lewis was asked which world religion makes its followers happy he replied, “While it lasts, worshipping oneself is best.” He went on to say, “If you want a religion to make you really comfortable, I certainly don’t recommend Christianity.” The same might be said of Judaism because Ezekiel was commissioned to deliver God’s word to the rebellious Israelites in exile in Babylon. God sent him, he spoke God’s word, the people heard what he said and knew that he was a prophet. But recognising Ezekiel was a prophet was no guarantee they would act on what he said.

Jesus also found this to be true for his own people in the Nazareth synagogue. The scribes, Pharisees and locals demanded to know on whose authority Jesus taught and acted. They acknowledged that he possessed wisdom but they didn’t see his teaching and miracles as the dawning of God’s kingdom. Nor did they acknowledge God as the source of his power. The people knew all about Jesus. They had grown up with him. They knew he was a bright boy but knowing **about** someone is not the same as **knowing** who that person really is. The ordinariness of Jesus and his being filled with divine power did not configure with their idea of a Messianic Saviour, so it prevented them from becoming his disciples. They thought in a worldly way – they suffered from the tall poppy syndrome!

When people witnessed the healings and miracles of Jesus, the gospels tell us that the people were amazed. In Nazareth it is Jesus who is amazed at the non-faith of the people. Acknowledging that Jesus has power is not faith. No amount of factual knowledge about Jesus leads to faith. Faith is having confidence in God’s saving power revealed to us **through** Jesus.

It has always been like this. God’s agents, including Jesus himself have always been rejected by their compatriots. Millions of people who watch the TV series ‘The Chosen’ can relate to the portrayal of Jesus as a human being that we can relate to. That is good, but it is not Jesus’ similarities to us as humans that really matters. It is his **difference** from us as the Son of God that matters. Faith depends on what is distinctive in Jesus. The Saviour must be different from those he saves.

St Paul learned the hard way that Christian disciples suffer as Christ suffered. Paul told the Corinthians that God allowed him to suffer a debilitating sickness as Job did, in order to prevent him from being puffed up, or to put it colloquially, ‘up himself.’ Once he realised this he found, like Elijah, that God’s love provided the strength he needed to carry on with his ministry.

Christianity is the world’s most persecuted religion at this time. In the Western world the attack is focussed on the Catholic Church and its building because to be truly Catholic means much more than acknowledging that Jesus was a good man who did great things and urged us to love each other unconditionally, in order to create Utopia on earth. Those who claim to

be Catholic yet hold these views are being seduced by worldly secularism and so abandon the distinctive Catholic understanding of the Sacraments and so bend the knee to the secular god of relevance by abandoning the Catholic belief that God is the creator and holds all life to be precious. True Catholics must see beyond the good works of Jesus and the Church. We must trust what God has revealed to us about life and salvation. We must hold fast to this faith, teach it and suffer for it and because of it. Being a faithful Catholic Christian may make us joyful, but it is unlikely to make us comfortable and happy in the worldly sense. Whatever turns you on will do that, but don't confuse it with salvation. Only those who persevere to the end will be saved.

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