

Pentecost 20, 6/10/2013, Holy Trinity

Luke 17:1-10

The beginning of this morning's Gospel reading leads us to think of our responsibility towards other people and especially to children.

Temptation and sin seems to be inevitable but be careful that you are not the person who leads another into sin and especially if that person is a child.

Then we are brought fairly and squarely into the question of forgiving a person who has done us wrong.

I may be willing to forgive once a day, but seven times, you must be joking!

If the first disciples of Jesus saw these issues as "nigh on impossible" there is no wonder that they asked Jesus to "Increase our faith".

In answer to this request Jesus sends us into the world of slavery and servitude.

You don't treat slaves as equals: you don't thank them: they are there to serve you.

The trouble is that we may assume that many of those who heard Luke's story would have agreed with the concept.

Slaves are slaves: servants are servants and you have to keep them in their place.

They were born to be part of the structure of society and they had to know their place.

We may be appalled at this but these have been dominant values for much of Christian history.

Paul writing to the Ephesian Christians says much the same when he enjoins wives to obey husbands, slaves to obey masters and children to obey parents.

This may have been all right for Luke's audience until they come to verse 10: "So you also, when you have done everything you were ordered to do, should say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done'".

Here we are the movers and shakers of society, of various aspects of church life, of our profession, of our particular club and now we are reduced to the status of slaves!

All have to give account for themselves.

It brings everyone down to the same level.

It debunks the idea that I am of value as a human being because of the good that I do, or what I achieve in my profession, or in my material possessions.

This does not mean that I grovel, or put on the Uriah Heap act of "I'm very humble, I am."

Nor, does it mean that God is the master who is heartless, just waiting for us to 'slip up' so that he can come down on us like 'a ton of bricks'.

This, then, brings up the question: what is our value if it is not in what we achieve?

It is crucial for all of us especially for those whose ability to achieve much in the eyes of society is limited whether by disability, illness, age or for some other reason.

Jesus presents us with the idea of God as a loving parent, who loves no matter what: a loving Father who values us because of who we are: a Father who cares for the sick, the lepers, the sinners, the outcasts.

The more we accept this understanding of God, the less we are inclined to "play the game" of our worth being in what we achieve, the more we can value others, the more time we can give to others, the more chance we have of changing the world.

It is thinking outside of the box: it is pushing the boundaries so that the people of the world, of this parish, of this suburb can be what they are meant to be and to reflect the true image and glory of God.

This is our mission, our challenge and we can bring this about as we reflect the love of God in Christ Jesus to those whom we meet in daily living.

Seize the day and change some small or big part of the world today.