

## Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July 2022

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God is love, let us adore God by sharing God's love.  
God is ever present, around us and within us,  
we worship together in God.

**Readings**        Genesis 12:1-3 & 18:1-8  
                         Colossians 1:1-10 ([The Living Bible](#))  
                         Luke 10:38- 42

### Reflection 1

This morning we read again the opening paragraphs of Paul's letter to the church at Colossae and consider it against our other readings from Genesis and Luke. In this reading Paul encourages those who are following the way to be filled with the knowledge of God's will. The church is a Pauline construct, not a Jesus construct; the church came from groups of people who were introduced to the message of the gospel, gathering to reflect with each other, to encourage each other and to share with each other. They were to concentrate on the message and how they could grow in their knowledge of God and be followers of the way.

This week in his daily devotions, Richard Rohr suggests that we should reflect on what we are living for, exploring how concentrating on living the message is more fruitful than living in confrontation with the world. The message of Jesus is about unity, community, relationships, and love. Paul expected people following the way to live and be a different community, learning together, and journeying into the world from the strength of the way. Over the year we seem to have lost something of this and now it can feel as if we live the opposite, fully invested in the world whilst occasionally coming together as church.

Following Jesus is more about behaviour than belonging if the belonging is about finding our place in the world, and our behaviour is governed by the choices we make. We are Christ in our interaction with others, not in our fine words.

Our reading from Luke reminds us of the tension between learning and serving, Mary wants to sit and listen, to learn from the master, but Martha in her responsibility to hospitality spends all her time in preparing the meal, and our reading suggests resenting Mary's approach. Perhaps it would be helpful to ask ourselves, how does what I have chosen to do help me to grow in my knowledge of God? Last week the lectionary reading from Luke was the story of the Good Samaritan, the Priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan all made choices, how do we view those choices and what do we learn from them? One of the core lessons from the Good Samaritan is that anyone who is in need is my neighbour and my concern for them should be demonstrated in a practical response, and perhaps in today's reading which follows directly from that story we should draw on that wisdom. Martha's response to Jesus' visit was practical but was there a need for that response or was Mary's the more appropriate response to a rare opportunity to listen to Jesus?

Today one of the churches in the pastorate celebrates its anniversary. Church anniversaries are a celebration of journeying together, a sharing of the way. What we do when we are together is important – reflecting, encouraging, and sharing. An anniversary adds in the opportunity to remember, to celebrate and to plan, for the journey is still going on, and we never stop learning more about God, and we never stop having the opportunity to encounter and share with others along the way. Today we will eat together, and that food has needed preparation and we give thanks for the food we will share and to those who have set aside time to prepare it but eating together is an opportunity to keep sharing in a different way.

Abram set food before his visitors just as Martha sought to do, except it was Sarai who did the preparation. Abram then stood to one side whilst his visitors ate, I wonder how much the

experience allowed Abram to grow in his knowledge of God. Brian McLaren talks about this passage, and in particular the concept of Abram being blessed to be a blessing as a reminder that the Jesus way is all about the concept of 'us', or oneness. We are taught that it is 'us' for them, 'us' with them, 'us' for the benefit and blessing of all, just as Abraham was to be a blessing to all.

When we drift from this notion into 'me' territory, my clan, my country, my religion, our sense of identity can also drift, and we can lose site of the oneness which is at the heart of the Jesus message. This blessing on Abraham required a stepping off the map of what's known, making this new way by walking into the unknown. Growth and knowledge of God requires such a leap of faith, for staying put rarely expands knowledge. To fulfil our call to be a blessing requires us to do the same as Abraham whether that is trying new things in place of the things we have done in the past, or a more radical stepping off the map such as leaving behind a building and journeying on.

Questions and fresh readings of Scripture become passageways out of thought-boxes, mental stages and cages that confine us in our journey, they open up an exodus that leads us on our quest for truth in the wild and unmapped places. A faith journey is not about repetition of what those who have gone before have done, rather we following their example in how they did things that challenged the status quo. Out of love for the truth for today we must dare to be precipitators of change and start a gentle revolution that can re-birth that original Abrahamic call to be a blessing to all people.

An anniversary celebrates what has been but also what can be. We live in a world in which we face four global emergencies, and these should be focussing our attention on how we can be a blessing to the world. There is a prosperity crisis which has led us to abuse the planet and render future life unsustainable if we do not change things. What can we do as church to demonstrate we take this seriously, how can we be a blessing? There is an equity crisis as the gap between rich and poor continues to grow leaving more people without a sustainable future. What can we do as church to challenge this way of life, how can we be a blessing? There is a security crisis in which the widening gap between the rich minority and the poor majority cause both sides to become increasingly violent in their actions and attitudes, arming themselves with more and more catastrophic weapons. How can we as church share our message of love and peace, how can we be a blessing? Finally, there is a spirituality crisis where all the world's religions, fearing their own sustainability, fail to not only address the other three crisis but may inadvertently encourage actions which are counterproductive to human survival. How do we as church grasp the concept of 'us' and working with other faiths become the blessing that the world needs.

As we plan for the future it is not about survival of our small corner but about planning our journey to demonstrate care for the planet, a passion for equal opportunity and justice, living simply and building community through a shared experience. It is about taking every opportunity not simply to love God with everything we are but to take time to gain more knowledge about God and in our sharing together find every way possible to be a blessing to others. That is to follow the way of Jesus.