

Sunday 18th August 2019

Jeremiah 23:23-29, Hebrews 11:29-12:2, Luke 12:49

Well now, I have told you before about my mother in law.....she once told me that you could tell about someone by how clean the cupboard under the sink was, well obviously once I knew that whenever she visited I made sure that the cupboard under the sink was very clean and in fact the whole house had a major spring-clean.

Luckily she has not visited for years, ah actually maybe that is where I am going wrong! The cupboard under the sink is fine, but I do have a room that I have to keep the door closed if guests are coming!

So this morning hearing that Jesus did not come to bring peace to the earth, well that is a bit of a shock isn't it? Luke tells us that Jesus came to bring division, Matthew tells us it was a sword.

Whats it all about, the angels told the shepherds in Bethlehem that the Messiah had come (a translation

for Messiah is Prince of Peace). And Isaiah told 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.'

Lets have a closer look, they are on their way to Jerusalem and on the way Jesus is expanding on some of his teaching. To bring fire, a cleansing fire and the baptism, talking of his death, what stress I am under until it is completed – **will they never understand.....how many times must I explain.**

Division in households, well households were different in the time of Jesus – generations would live together as is still the case in some countries today so households could be quite large.

The media love to tell us at Christmas time when families spend more time together, how difficult it can be, counting the days till Auntie Jane goes back home, families can certainly be divided.

There is division all around, in families, in churches, in our country with Brexit, in the States with Donald Trump.

My Dad didn't come to church except for weddings, baptisms and funerals, he had quite a bit to say about 'the church' Mum and I came week by week, Dad lived his life by Christian values, he didn't stop Mum coming but I think he might have had a bit of a moan sometimes.

Not just family, with working patterns these days Sunday working can also cause division – having just done a few years of Sunday working I wouldn't want to go back to that – but we don't all have a choice. I was lucky in that I was able to come to the 8 o'clock.

Division is always uncomfortable whether in and between families or in and between countries. Do you remember this Victorian hymn we used to sing it, but it is not in our hymn book now

Once to every man and nation,

comes the moment to decide,
in the strife of truth with falsehood,
for the good or evil side.

Can we stand up for Jesus, for what is right and loving and just and Godly, without causing conflict.

Jesus knew that loving your enemy doesn't mean that you won't make any!

Sometimes division becomes inevitable.

Christians are called to love both God and our neighbour, and to do that sometimes we need to make a stand, against injustice or discrimination or hypocrisy.

Today is the Sunday after the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary and we remember that

When Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him and called him, and he said Who are my mother and my brothers, here are my mother and my brothers,

whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother....

So who is family, well some of us have our own family, but we all have this family here today, we are all part of the body of Christ in this place, the church family.

On Monday mornings when Bill and his sister Doreen steward, there is a large group of people who come together to share fellowship, coffee, biscuits, birthdays, support and care they are family.

Was Jesus perhaps causing a crisis, so that people, us have to re-act – to make a choice.

Jesus says that we have a choice: to recognise who he really is, or to choose not to do so, to recognise the signs of God at work, or to close our eyes and ignore them.

Did you know that the percentage of people who come to church in this country is less than 5%, that makes 95% who do not attend church. We are a

precious remnant, we are candles in the darkness, that is a big responsibility.

We are preparing to be a light for a couple of new initiatives for TAT – I hope you know what that is all about now! Thursday at Two, come and join us for tea and cake, chat to make new friends be part of community,

And Little Seeds, a Christian based play and stay group which will begin on 6th September in The Pallant. A chance for toddlers to play, for carers to chat, to hear a little about our faith through story and song, to be part of our family. If anybody feels that they would like to be involved with either of these things, this family helping new family please do let me know.

Jesus is faithful and He asks us to be faithful.

As Jeremiah says we must speak the word faithfully and in the letter to the Hebrews we are reminded that God uses those who are weak and imperfect, there is a place for each one of us, that we are surrounded by

so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with
perseverance the race that is set before us.

So we are all called to be faithful, to be a light, to be in
relationship with, to be in community, part of the
family and to make space for the spirit to guide us in
all things to interpret the present time.