

Sunday Sermon

Revd Canon Charles Jenkin – 11th July 2021 – Trinity 6

Ephesians 1.3-14; Mark 6.14-29

The death of John the Baptist is just sad; capriciously beheaded by a weak, drunk and infatuated king, for no good reason. What a waste! But there is a point to the story. John the Baptist joins the long tradition of the prophets of God who have so annoyed the authorities in Jerusalem that they have been executed. And of course Jesus faces a similar fate.

Yet this is all part of God's plan to pour out his blessings on a redeemed world. The writer of our first reading this morning, of the letter to the Ephesians, is feeling overwhelmed by the blessings of God which have come about through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Put side by side, these two readings draw a stark contrast between the sinful and capricious ways of this world, and the blessings that God is ready to bestow on those who willing to trust and follow Jesus.

One of the themes in that first reading, that is particular important, is the idea that Christians have been adopted as children into a new family, with new ways, new privileges, new love, and new purpose. And with a new inheritance. It is a really good way to think about being a Christian, being adopted into a new family. Of course in real life adoption can have its challenges, and becoming and growing as a Christian has its challenges too. But it is all ultimately about love.

There are other ways in which this idea of adoption is both inspiring and helpful. Becoming part of this new family is not something we could ever have done for ourselves; it is entirely a generous and loving gift of God. And if we find it hard going at times, learning to be part of this new family, then perhaps this is only to be expected. There are indeed new ways, God's ways, to grow into; indeed, it can take a lifetime. And, there are sometimes, inevitably, family arguments.

The important thing to remember however, is how the loving generosity of our heavenly Father covers everything and binds up the wounds. The Church is not a new family that we ourselves are creating; it is not a human construct. Rather it is the work of God, and the place of each of us in his Church, is ultimately a matter of his purposes, to which we can only be courageously and humbly faithful.

CJ. 11:07:21