

The Shoreline Benefice

Wednesday Morning Worship, 28th July 2021

You can use this act of worship whenever you want.

You are invited though to "join" at 9.30am, the time when we worship "together". The codes to join are the same as the ones we use for Sunday and they don't change. If you haven't got the numbers needed, please be in touch.

Introduction.

One of the reasons I like John's Gospel a lot is because of the way the author uses misunderstanding and irony to get his points across and to teach his audience, both in his own day and now, about Christ and about God. Today's reading from John follows the raising of Lazarus.

To start with I will now light our candle. Please light a candle as well. If you want to be safe, please feel free to use a battery powered one!

The Lord be with you.

And also with you!

Collect

Lord God,
your Son left the riches of heaven
and became poor for our sake:
when we prosper save us from pride,
when we are needy save us from despair,
that we may trust in you alone;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reading: John 11.45-53

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done. So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, 'What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.' But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one

man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.’ He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was about to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to put him to death.

Reflection:

“You know nothing at all!” It is one of my favourite statements. How to dig yourself the most amazing of holes!

At the beginning of this passage we are told that after Jesus had raised Lazarus, many Jews who had seen what Jesus had done, believed in him. Many, but not all of them. Some went to the Pharisees to tell them what they had seen. They hadn’t been with Mary and struggled to believe the stories doing the round.

Alarmed about the developments the chief priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the council. “What are we to do?” Not a determined “What shall we do?” but “What are we to do?” They are at a complete loss about how to react and about whether anything can be done at all. “If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him” is seriously ironical for more than one reason. With the advantage of hind sight we know that stopping Jesus is neither going to stop the miracles, nor will it stop people believing in him. On the contrary, only more people end up believing in Jesus.

The real reason for their panic however is not what people believe. They are not at all concerned about the people “that will believe in him”. They are mainly concerned about their own positions. The Pharisees are worried that the Romans will take (rather than destroy) their place and nation. To have their holy place and nation taken, would mean the end of their social and religious positions as well as the status that came with it. Here we are dealing with people who in the first place, and maybe only, care about themselves and their privileged positions. Echoes of this attitude we find in all the gospels, where Jesus regularly ticks the Pharisees off for being hypocrites, caring more about themselves than about anything else.

Caiaphas, after his arrogant statement saying “You know nothing at all”, reiterates that attitude when he says: “Do you not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation

destroyed. Caiaphas is scheming in a most sneaky way when he suggests that this man is to die for the people.

As Caiaphas is the high priest, what he says is not simply seen as a statement made by any old priest, but as a prophecy. Prophecy was a gift that came with the office of a high priest. What he said was God's word and God's will.

Irony of ironies! Caiaphas, motivated by selfishness, utters in complete ignorance a truth that once realised will have an impact far greater than what he was desperately trying to avoid. Not only will Jesus die for Israel, his death will gather all God's children into the new people Israel. And all of this comes after he has told everyone who did and did not want to hear, that they knew nothing at all! Amen.

Prayers

In our prayers today we may want to ask for wisdom to know when to speak and when to keep our thoughts for ourselves.

Jesus the Christ, Son of God, Saviour
enfold me in your being
that I may be sure that I am with you
in all I think
and all I say
and all I do.

When I pray,
may I be sure
that I enter not into temptation
but watch and pray with you. **Amen.**

(From: Ted Burge - Lord of All, Hear our Prayer)

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Blessing

We finish praying for God's blessing.

May the Father from whom every family
in earth and heaven receives its name
strengthen us so that Christ may live in our hearts,
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us, and with all whom we know and love,
this and every day.

Amen.