

Reflection Tuesday 20th October 2020

Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart,
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because he's given
Jesus Christ, his Son.

And now let the weak say "I am
strong"
let the poor say "I am rich",
because of what the Lord has done for
us;
Give thanks

Henry Smith S the F 78

And now let the weak say "I am
strong"
let the poor say "I am rich",
because of what the Lord has done for
us;

Which of these hymn lines speaks strongest to you today?

Share with God the feelings that this hymn brings to your heart.

Read Matthew 22 v34-46

Reflection

The Pharisees, those experts in the law who tested Jesus in this passage from Matthew would not have disputed Jesus's answer to them.

Those two commandments that we think of as central to Christianity, were also central to Judaism.

So - no problem or disagreement there.

But Jesus responded with his own question, and that became more controversial, when Jesus disagreed with their answer, even quoting Psalm 110 to prove his point.

This seemed to turn the tables on the Pharisees, because we are told that they had got together to test him, as they had heard that he had already silenced the Sadducees.

The Pharisees obviously decided they could be more subtle, but they still considered this to be a test, a trap, that they hoped Jesus would fall in with his answer.

But, of course he didn't - although he was fully aware of the trap. He responds gently, even mildly, by explaining carefully his understanding of the scriptures. He could have reacted with irritation, he could have reacted with anger, and he could have exploded out of that trap with denunciation. He could have told them that he knew what they were really like, he knew what they were really trying to do but he didn't - he engaged them in theological discussion as he did the Sadducees, and, of course, in doing so he moved out of the trap, because of his knowledge and understanding of God's purpose.

For both the Pharisees and the Sadducees the end game was the same -

The Sadducees did not have the courage to question him any longer and the Pharisees had not a word in reply - even when Jesus proved to them that their answer was wrong.

Jesus's responses are gentle - we have that hymn we don't sing much anymore - "Gentle Jesus - meek and mild" - true ...but incomplete.

He states his beliefs, he explains, he interprets to those who want to listen - he answers truthfully, firmly, uncompromisingly.

He shows strength of character, strength of mind as well.

To our gentle Jesus meek and mild, we have to add steely strength and the conviction that God is with him as he speaks.

Can we face down those whose attitudes we would like to change without losing our temper, with strength of character but gentleness, with strength of mind tempered by love?

To think about

What the Pharisees really asked Jesus was "what is at the heart of our religion."

His reply was true, clear and unequivocal.

It was all about living in a loving relationship with God and it was all about living in a loving relationship with your fellow humans.

If we are asked "what is at the heart of our religion", what do we answer?

How can we most effectively carry out Christ's instructions today?

A Time of Prayer

Loving Lord,

we remember the gentle caring people of the world whose love for you radiates out from their lives.

Those who listen, those who reassure, those who understand we remember those who have touched us

who have strengthened our faith and enriched our knowledge

We ask that we can be like them

kind and caring to all people, no matter how they treat us

Let us share your love and your care with all those we encounter

In your name

AMEN

Wednesday 21st October

Matthew 7:12

Doing to others what you would have them do to you may not be what you or they want - is it like be careful lest you get what you wish for?

When we say that someone "loves themselves" it sounds like a criticism.

How hard is it to love your neighbour as yourself?