

Christian Basics!

Ezekiel 17^{22-end}; Psalm 92¹⁻⁸; 2 Corinthians 5^{6-10,14-17}; Mark 4²⁶⁻³⁴

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!. [2 Corinthians 5¹⁷]

For those of us who have been Christians for a (very) long time, we sometimes need a reminder of the basics of our faith. Today as we celebrate with Angela as she publicly affirms her faith in Baptism we take the time to remind ourselves of those things that are vital to our faith.

- ✦ Ezekiel reminds us about God: **All the trees of the field shall know that I am the Lord. I bring low the high tree, I make high the low tree.**

What sort of God do we believe in? Any God worthy of our worship surely has to be free, powerful and able to command respect. Faith is never based on what we can do, but always on what God can do.

- ✦ Paul reminds us that **all of us must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or bad.**

It is one of the characteristics of our age that people don't receive believe that they are either responsible for or accountable for their actions. Yet, God does hold us accountable and, even if were our life taken on balance weighing up the good and the bad, it probably isn't impressive. Against the absolute standards of God, we are without hope.

- ✦ What really matters is not what we do, but what Christ does: he makes us a **new creation**, and he alone makes us **new!**

The Good News of the Gospel is that through Jesus God does for us what we could never do for ourselves: we are called to repent and God promises forgiveness. Embracing the new is a rejection of the old - you cannot simply add a bit of Christianity to the life-style you choose for yourself: the symbolism in immersion baptism, of death and resurrection is the most accessible lesson. Faith in Christ presses the reset button on our lives.

- ✦ Jesus tells us that it isn't the amount of faith we have but simply that we have faith: the **parable of the mustard seed** shows us that the smallest of beginning will grow.

Reaching out to God is faith enough - he does the rest. Forgiveness is his business; peace is his business; hope is his business.

- ✦ Paul also challenges us when he speaks about our motivation to be the people God has called us to be: **the love of Christ urges us on.**

Because we are inspired by Christ's love for us, the measure of any action after we are embraced by God is to all our actions thereafter are judged against that standard - that is what we have to live up to. If you live by the single rule of selfless love you need no other rules.

- ✦ The Psalmist tells us that we need to **give thanks to the Lord** and also to celebrate his **faithfulness.**

Christians are positive people - one of the changes God initiates is to their mood and their face: you know that they are new people because of the smile in their eyes and the joy in their living.

We come full circle - Christian basics depend on God. If you can't or don't depend on God then nothing else makes sense.

Baptism is an outward sign of being washed clean - it is also a powerful symbol of faith itself: you cannot baptise yourself - it has to be done to you!