

A Different View!

Amos 5^{6-7,10-15}; Psalm 90^{12-end}; Hebrews 4^{12-end}; Mark 10¹⁷⁻³¹

For God all things are possible. [Mark 10²⁷]

One of the best ways to resolve conflicts between people is getting them to see things from the other persons' perspective. We are secure in our own views and convictions but all too often our approach to others is that we defend their right to be wrong!

If that is hard, have we ever seriously tried to see things from God's perspective? What if we saw the world as God sees it, or if we saw ourselves as God sees us? What we know from our readings today is this:

- ✠ The standard is absolute:
 - ✠ The readings from Amos shows how God sees the actions of a people where truth has gone out of fashion and, by a perversion of justice (**the gate** was the place where justice was administered in any community), the affluent build better lives for themselves by oppression of those whose situation becomes increasingly hopeless.
 - ✠ Amos says that **silence** may be the human response as any protest was futile but that the threat of exile as God's punishment was very real and the houses that meant so much would be left empty and the vineyards that were the accepted status symbols of the time would be left untended.
 - ✠ Hebrews tells us that there is nowhere to hide from God - nothing is invisible to God. The NRSV says that God knows our **thoughts and intentions**, but it perhaps clearer in the Greek as **thoughts and feelings**!
 - ✠ Mark records the encounter between Jesus and the rich young man. This is man who wants to know what to **DO to inherit eternal life**. He recognises Jesus as a **Good Teacher** but, while he knows what is expected in the law, he isn't prepared to do what it would take for him to follow Jesus: **go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me**. This was a person that had impressed Jesus - it says **Jesus, looking at him, loved him** - but the security of wealth was a block to

discipleship. It doesn't have to be money, it can be anything that give us security, but while it makes us feel secure it makes discipleship impossible. When Jesus says **it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God** it is his hyperbole, his humour: but the point is valid nevertheless!

- ✠ Did Peter think that Jesus would be impressed when he **began to say 'Look, we have left everything and followed you.'** Did he really have any option?

What God is looking for - what he wants to see in our lives - is that, in the succinct message from Amos, we **hate evil and love good and establish justice in the gate**. That we live transparently and our security is in God not in anyone or anything else, accepting our life in Christ as a free and unconditional gift from God.

- ✠ Before we decide this is too much we need to remember that God has been in our shoes in Jesus - he knows what we face, he has seen things from our perspective.
 - ✠ When I was preparing for this sermon I came across the phrase *earned sinlessness*, and thought it helpful. We only ever know temptation in part because eventually we give in: Jesus' experience was different because only one who does not yield can know its power. Jesus divinity doesn't protect him from his humanity!
 - ✠ The fact that Jesus is **our great high priest** - who is both priest and victim - means that he doesn't just see things from our perspective but that, on the cross, he took our place.

I want to say two things in conclusion:

1. **For God all things are possible**. We don't have to make ourselves perfect, we just have to be open to God doing it in us!
2. Some think that the challenge to leave everything for God is too much. Despite the fact that Jesus promises a return 100-fold in this life and beyond, it seems too much. However, it is the case that when we love God less we love everything less and when we love God more our capacity for love is greatly increased - it isn't about stark choice but it is about priorities.