

Change - everywhere except the collection!

Isaiah 66¹⁰⁻¹⁴; Psalm 66¹⁻⁸; Galatians 6⁷⁻¹⁶; Luke 10^{1-11,16-20}

*Do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.
[Luke 10²⁰]*

Everything is in the readings for today:

- ✠ Disciples are being sent out - 70 of them in pairs - to **proclaim the kingdom of God** and to **heal the sick**. These disciples took some risks in faith and they saw the power of faith in exorcisms. Jesus plays it down - he says that this isn't as important as the fact that **their names are written in heaven**. The disciples need some sense of perspective - a few scampering spirits is nothing compared to Jesus statement: **I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning**.
- ✠ Paul is clear that we **reap what we sow** and that, whatever we have achieved in life through heritage or effort, the only thing we ever have to boast about is **the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**.
- ✠ The Psalmist is inspirational in his entreaty to **be joyful** after witnessing the **works of God** in nature and who **suffers not our feet to slip**.
- ✠ Isaiah has the fascinating image that faith is as good as a baby nursing at the breast or snuggling into a **glorious bosom**. (It would be a brave preacher who would linger here!)

So what do we do with all this?

I do want to affirm you - all people of faith have their name written in heaven!
Thanks be to God, we are secure in life and death.

I do want to reassure you that Satan is defeated - that doesn't stop him having influence, but it does mean that he has no power. We have to live in the strength of the Holy Spirit and not to allow the devil to have any leverage in our lives.

I do want to encourage you with the fact that we are kingdom people. We are citizens first and foremost that live under God's rule and those who don't respect and accept that as the primary call on our lives respect neither us nor God.

I do want to spur you on to be more courageous in faith.

Let me give you a specific example. As you know, we are spending a vast amount of money on the Church and the money we are drawing on is the money from which we have derived the interest payments that have made us solvent as a Parish (it costs about £6,000 per month for us to break even). We have been clear that we can't ask for money we already have, but we do need to replace the money that, in faith we are spending. Our heating consultant told me a story of a Church that needed £750,000 to complete a new heating system and he challenged them to pray. They prayed and made it known they were praying - and a single donor gave the deficit. I passed this on at our Fellowship Evening and we began to pray. A couple of days later we received notification of a grant for £32,000. We need to be courageous in prayer and consistent in faith for the rest of the funds we need to secure the future of the Parish. Will you join in?

What else needs to change?

A praying faith; a joyful faith; a witnessing faith; a faith that works for the kingdom values of justice, peace and love; a faith that glories in the cross and the difference God makes.