

Always a Winner!

Amos 7⁷⁻¹⁵; Psalm 85^{5-end}; Ephesians 1¹⁻¹⁴; Mark 6¹⁴⁻²⁹

*In him you.....were marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit.
[Ephesians 1¹³]*

At 8.00pm this evening 25 people will walk on to the hallowed turf at Wembley Stadium – two halves, extra time and perhaps penalties will follow and at the end there will be a winner and there will be a loser. That is the stark reality of football.

In about 15 minutes some of us will walk the length of the aisle and there will be no losers, only winners! God will do his part and then he trusts us to do ours and the result is certain.

Hear what Paul tells us as he writes to the Ephesians:

- ✘ **He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.** It is no accident that we are here – God has always had his hand on us and deliberately marked us as his before even our parents knew we existed.
- ✘ **He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ.** A Baptism is always a celebration of family and God in Christ makes us full members of his family, the Church. The youngest member of the Church is no more the Church of tomorrow than the oldest member is the Church of yesterday: all are the Church of today and belong together.
- ✘ **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.** Baptism celebrates the ‘rest’ button on our lives and the assurance that all our sin – past, present and future – is forgiven and forgotten. Whatever we do, when God sees us, he sees Jesus!

- ✘ **In him you were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.** I think that everyone has heard me say before that my favourite part of the Baptism service is when we use the oil blessed by the Bishop on Maundy Thursday and make the sign of the cross on the candidates’ head with the words, ‘Christ claims you for his own.’ It is the heart of the covenant made – something from which the candidate can never escape and we know that they are Christs’ for the whole of their life.

This is what God does for us!

As I understand it, Jidenna means ‘Hold on to God!’ and that is something that has to be both taught and caught as he sees faith in action in his parents, godparents and in the Church community of which he is a part. This is a very great responsibility, to know that when Jidenna sees any of us we have to be the lens through which he sees Jesus.

We pray that Jidenna will live up to his name and will always hold on to God, but we may be sure that God will always hold him as he holds each one of us.