

Disappointment!

Jeremiah 23¹⁻⁶; Psalm 23; Ephesians 2^{11-end}; Mark 6^{30-34,53-end}

For you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. [Ephesians 2¹⁹⁻²⁰]

There was a lot of discussion about disappointment last Monday following England coming second in the European Cup Final. The best quote came from Homer Simpson and his definition of disappointment: 'Hope is disappointment that hasn't happened yet!' Had the result been different the fans would have done to the team as the crowds did to Jesus (who just wanted a break) and hounded them everywhere.

What was so disappointing was that, in the aftermath, so many were guilty of racism and abused members of the team because of the colour of their skin: that was both criminal and morally wrong and there can be no defence of that. Take note that God (in the prophecy of Jeremiah) has committed himself to deal with those who are destructive or divisive!

Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, addresses directly the view held by many of the 1st century Jewish Christians; that they were superior to the Gentiles because of their racial and national identity. So, today, we need to hear again that, in Christ, not only do we belong together but that we are together as equals:

- ✘ **You who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** There is only one way in to the Christian faith: repentance, accepting forgiveness as a fact and then living up to that profession of faith by becoming more and more like Jesus. No-one becomes a Christian by accident: it is a conscious acceptance of grace with that awareness that we all get 'in' the same way!

- ✘ **He is our peace.** The peace that is able to live with ourselves with confidence, live with others with joy and live under God with security is a gift of grace. Psalm 23 expresses that tranquillity of faith that we aspire to – in life and in death to feel held and secure. That is predicated on that first phrase: **The Lord is my Shepherd.** When we know that as a certainty we can order our fears and anxieties and relationship in a way that is shaped by the **peace** that is God's gift to us.
- ✘ **[He has reconciled] to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.** Some hostility is easy to recognise: those social media attacks on footballers, for instance were direct and could then be directly condemned. That isn't always the case. Avoiding people, ignoring them, the conversations that are designed to exclude: these are subtle, but no less hostile. We are reconciled to God and to one another. Hostility has been put to death – and we have no right, ever, to keep it alive!
- ✘ **So you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.** It is always our relationship to Christ that shapes our relationships with others: we are never gatekeepers – God is; we are keepers of the faith with the responsibility to inspire and pass that faith in – in the tradition of the apostles and prophets; as we have been brought into the family and have been accepted and welcomed, so we become those who accept and welcome others.

This equality is vital, **being built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God**, a place where God feels at home and so does everyone else. Anything that detracts from that equality under God – discrimination, bias, hatred, etc – is sinful and is always to be challenged.