

Better than Jesus?

Psalm 127; Joshua 5¹³⁻⁶²⁰; Matthew 11²⁰⁻³⁰

For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve. [Mark 10⁴⁵]

As we prepare for our PCC on Thursday when we will consider the ministry and mission of this Church into this Parish and the part that you and I will play and that the question for us all this morning is, 'Do we think that we are better than Jesus?' He says that he came **not to be served but to serve** and the more committed to Christ we are the truer that will become of us.

- ✘ Isaiah sets the scene for the one who was to be expected, *The Suffering Servant*. We are all familiar with those poetic cadences:

**surely he has borne our infirmities;
we accounted him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted;
he was wounded for our transgressions;
crushed for our iniquities;
by his bruises we are healed;
he was oppressed;
he was afflicted;
like a lamb led to the slaughter;
like sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth;
he was cut off from the land of the living;
stricken for the transgression of my people;
they made his grave with the wicked;
it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he poured out himself to death;
he bore the sins of many;
he made intercession for the transgressors.**

Whatever we may be called to do or challenged to become it will not come near the work of the sinless Son of God becoming human and becoming sin for us. However uncomfortable the calling and however inconvenient it may be we are only ever called to a fraction of what Jesus did for us. Do we think that we are better than Jesus?

- ✘ The sermon that is the Book of Hebrews notes that Jesus, God the Son, was given the work of becoming the sacrificial **High Priest** by his Father. The point is made that **Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears; he learned obedience through what he suffered**. All of this is work that had to be done and it was the calling fulfilled by Jesus. The result was that **he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him**.

Melchizedek, the High Priest that Abraham encountered, points out that there is no retirement from the tasks that God gives: **you are a priest for ever**.

So, here, we have that calling to prayer – something that everyone can do, to stand in the gap for and on behalf of the Church and for and behalf of others – and the calling to tenacity: someone who (in the words of Winston Churchill) *is someone who can't change his mind and won't change the subject*. Do we think that we are better than Jesus?

- ✘ Apart from hypocrisy, there are two things that define bad Churches: status and information as power – both demolished by Jesus in the Gospel:

What possessed James and John that made them think that they could approach God the Son, the agent of creation in the universe, and say, **Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you**. And they asked for status, on the **right and left** of Jesus! The response was to point out that that would mean taking **the cup** (a reference to Gethsemane, *take this cup from me?*) and sharing the **baptism** (that metaphor of burial) – something they would end up doing anyway – and even then, **to sit at my right hand and my left is not mine to grant**. Jesus didn't let this become a private exchange where information could be used as a sign of power or had a quiet word with Peter behind his hands, but blew it open and then **the ten... began to be angry**.

How did Jesus say, **it is not so among you?** I imagine that he was fairly strident: **whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant; who ever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all**. Now, do we think that we are better than Jesus?

Forgive me if I (or Penny and I together) have failed to give an example of service – in that I or we will have failed both you and God. The simple fact is that we are not better than Jesus and, together, we must learn how to serve in the place where God has placed us.