

Sermon, Feast of Christ the King
Ephesians 1:15-end

Last week we were asked to think about a few things about our Christian life – one of which was to determine what your spiritual gift is! Having given this a lot of consideration, I believe my gift is to challenge! (and for challenge, read pushy and bossy as well as trying to encourage out of the box thinking). So this morning I want to challenge you by going through the reading from Ephesians 1, which in itself is a challenge, and also a prayer – something else we discussed last week.

Paul begins his prayer with these words (v15):

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints

Paul is in prison in Rome when he writes this letter, and even there, many miles away, he has heard of how the Ephesians are taking care of each other and loving each other in the way Jesus taught. Remember the Gospel reading today - feed the hungry, give room to the homeless, care for the sick, visit those in prison? The Ephesians are doing it - all of it. They are a sharing, caring church doing the will of God.

Now I wonder, when we think about the impact of our Church, how the community views us and what they have heard about us. Has what we have done for

each other made a difference - if even our next door neighbours have heard of our love and care for one another? Has yours?

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

On Thursday night at the Fellowship Meeting (you must come when we start back up in the New Year), Fr Bob encouraged us to spend time in prayer, sitting in the Church in other people's pews! We know where each other sit, so we went and sat in your seat and prayed for you! We, like Paul, remembered you in our prayers. Except that the challenge is this – Paul did **not cease** to pray for his friends – it was ongoing, and earnest. Will we use our prayer diaries in the Contact List? Do we pray without ceasing for those we know and love? Will that translate into the Gospel message of giving in such a way that people notice?

V17: I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, Paul is asking God to send his Spirit to impart wisdom and revelation – Paul wants them to know Christ more, to have a deeper spiritual perception of what Jesus wants from and for them. Why?

V18 - so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,

The eyes of your heart, your inner being, the part that is changed by God, may know that we are chosen to be holy and called to be God's. Our hope is in our inheritance of everlasting life, but it is also for this moment, that we can live in God's Kingdom now, and have hope in now and be fruitful now.

V19: and (know) what is the immeasurable greatness of His power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

We have access to the immeasurable greatness and power of God – we are God's chosen family, heirs with Christ. Remember that tomorrow morning when you don't want to get out of bed, remember that when you are feeling down and sorry for yourself, remember that when you see other people struggling – you have immediate and full access to Jesus – his love, his power, his comfort, his burden bearing. We are called to be a triumphant people.

V20: God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,

and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

Ok, so guess what – it's all about Jesus. Christ our King, who died for us, who was raised from the dead and who is in all authority and power, now and forever. If this isn't Paul encouraging then I don't know what is! If this is the power that God has given to us, then we are indeed blessed – aren't we??

V22 concludes: **And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.**

Jesus is in charge, Christ is King. And a blueprint prayer from Paul:

- to pray for each other with thanksgiving,
- to realise the hope of the glorious inheritance to which we are called,
- to realise Jesus's incomparable great power for us who believe.

Encouraging? Yes. Challenging? Certainly! But we can start today! Here is the perfect opportunity, the baptism of a new member of the faith, Tio-James. In a few minutes this Church will be making promises to pray for him – will we do it unceasingly and with thanksgiving? Challenge number 1!

Will Tio-James grow up in the realisation of his glorious inheritance? If Christians around him don't live as though it were true, how will he know?
Challenge number 2.

And Challenge number 3, will we, as the people of God, be open to the power of the gospel to release us from sin and guilt and be useful in this world?
Will we be able to say to Tio James in all wisdom, that he one of God's holy people, that he is part of our eternal Kingdom?

Encourage one another and be challenged, for each other, and for Christ, your King.