

## Sermon for Trinity 1

Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy Ps. 41.

In these difficult and challenging times we have a lot to consider and ponder upon. If God so loved us, then we have a sacred duty to love one another, for what really is life all about if it consists only with those things that we have and enjoy.

Our Blessed Lord constantly encourages us to see life beyond the material of wealth and possessions for surely our lives are more than just food and our bodies more than the clothes that we wear. Today, in an affluent society such as many enjoy in the decadent Western World, people in general are not likely to think or consider whether this is all there is, and are very happy to take and enjoy the good things in our lifetime.

But as we have all recently witnessed due in the main to the Covid 19 pandemic, we are all experiencing a very rude awakening, for this virus shows no mercy to the rich and poor alike. We are awakening to the reality of the real world in which we live of poverty, injustice, intolerance, hate, discrimination, racism and equally tragically secularism.

We read in Revelation 3.17 the words of warning to Laodicean Christians, which fit the world so well today: "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."

So the poor, marginalised, oppressed and needy, the sick and suffering, Lazarus, they are more likely to hope for and deserve more. So if life does not consist in material possessions and riches, then the reading from today's epistle argues that our human life and our eternal life consists in love. What St John sets before us, in glorious theology is the connection between real knowledge, love and life.

God is love, St John tells us and importantly since we were **all** created in the image and likeness of God, our life indeed our very being is to be found in love. Could it be that likeness which has been distorted by sin and which can only be renewed within us by the gift and work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is constantly renewing us in knowledge and love, after the likeness of our Blessed Saviour Jesus Christ. By the Holy Spirit, we know and trust God the Father and God the Son, and we believe and receive the love that God has for each and every one of us.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we arrive at a new and complete knowledge and love of our fellow human, our neighbour. This Christian knowledge and love of God is to know and love Him as our Father. Christian knowledge and love of one another is to know and love brothers and sisters, for if God so loves us, we have a profound duty to love one another as brothers and sisters. Our refusal or failure to so love one another, is a denial and rejection of God's love.

So if our very being and life consist in His love, the lack of it is our death.. St John is very clear on this point as we read in Chapter 3 V. 14, "He who does not love abides in death." In reality, this is the lesson of our Lord's parable. The rich man's death, torment and regret, have all to do with a failure to love. James warns us that judgment is without mercy, to one who has shown no mercy. Tragically there have been too many who have suffered like George Floyd, where was the mercy?

The rich man and others like him, who have chosen the ways of today's world, without mercy, without forgiveness, without love and without any regret, they will discover just how much God will respect their decisions and choices. Tragically, at this time the world has chosen to be separated from God – hell is a state of self – exclusion from God and for far too many life has become unbearable.

The world needs to come to its senses, the matter is now desperately urgent. Alienation from God and the values that underpin the lives of every Christian is the root cause of so much misery and inequality in the world today. There is justifiable growing pain and anger within societies throughout the world but the world has no answers. The wrongs of the past cannot now regrettably be undone, they are a tragic stain on the history of the world. Evil acts and

actions are just that Evil but looking back in anger will not solve the obvious injustices that exist in the world today.

We need to conquer prejudice in all of its ugly forms by following the commandments of God, to love each other as God loves us. Mercy, forgiveness and love will free each human soul to a higher place. Love conquers all as light always conquers darkness. The world is crying out for a different way and that way for us is the Way of the Cross. God's love is free and forgives all at its own expense. Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for each and every one of us. So it follows, it is only in that love, in knowing and believing that love and receiving the full power of that love, that we shall ever be able to love one another and change the world for the better.

In His Love

Bishop +lan.