

Sermon for 17th.February 20
Jeremiah, ch. 17 v. 5 - 10
Psalm 1
1 Corinthians 1ch.15 v. 12 - 20
Luke ch. 6 v. 17 -26

Meeting the needs! Jesus provided a three-fold ministry.... To the mind, the body and the soul. Teaching, healing and spiritual cleansing! I once read that we as a church should be involved in all three of these ministries... but according to Paul, only one of these is applicable to us individually...how do we determine which one? I have a small book on the Ministry of Deliverance by Dominic Walker ...does Paul mention this ministry? Jesus certainly does in the Sermon on the mount which we have just read..." and those troubled with unclean spirits"...but that's for another time, because today I want to concentrate on Joy and Growth.

The good news was that the kingdom was at last being proclaimed, the past was leading up to this present time, the good news, and the kingdom was bringing in happiness and joy. For Mark this was so important he opens his gospel with it. C.S. Lewis wrote a book "Surprised by Joy" in which he cleverly interweaves his own conversion from agnosticism to christianity, with the lady he meets later on in life, whose name is..... Joy, but who very sadly died of cancer.

Now here's a book for you.. "The Book of Joy" by Archbishop Dennis Tutu and the Dalai Lama, two of the world's "tops" in the field of spirituality.

But from quite different backgrounds...one, evicted from his own country by communism and the other living through the dark days of conflict concerning racialism, but surviving to see "home rule", when one of his own people was released from prison. Quote p.103 fear and anger

Here are two points I have taken from the book that might.....might not...help

Take a few moments of quietness, perhaps just not even thinking, to create a state of thoughtlessness. This works like a painkiller, where fear and anger go away for a short moment, but the eventually come back again... with a little thoughtful thought and meditation we find we get to the root of the fear or anger.

We might discover the angry words were long in the past and no longer exist, except in our memory. When you think about these things, the intensity of the anger reduces and you develop your mental immunity so that anger arises less, and this is important as anger when not controlled changes a human being, and anything can happen.

But to the readings today...

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals and make mere flesh their strength... they shall be like a shrub in the desert (Jeremiah)

The first three verses of Psalm 1 happy are they... their delight is in the law of the Lord, They are like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither..(Psalm 1)

Blessed are you.. rejoice on that day and leap for joy... (Luke ch.6)

For growth trees need water, light, heat, air, space and minerals in the ground for sustenance.

Trees absorb CO₂ from the air, and through a process of photosynthesis through the cells, the carbohydrates descend to the roots. Water and mineral nutrients through the roots are drawn up by a tremendous power to the top of the tree, by a combined action of pumping from the roots and a sucking action due to the transpiration of the leaves, as oxygen in the form of water H₂O is released in to the air. A point to remember

is that the tree does not hoard moisture only for itself, it gives back in to the air O₂, hence the fragrance of trees and flowers.

Then of course there is a fungus in the earth called mycorrhizae, which nourishes the root system... sounds like a botany lesson...but look at the similarities:

1. Water.... Gives life(refreshes) drying up, destroys, takes away life..floods, and water cleanses.
Isaiah..For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty....and today's reading "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness
2. Light all trees and plants require light, cover them over and the end result is a faded yellow sickly plant. " I am the light of the world" All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not John 1 v. 3-5
3. Heat..... is essential for the tree, but depending upon which part of globe it lives in, for too much heat is also not good, unless it is palm trees and equatorial regions of the world, where leaves will adapt to losing transpiration.A Temperate climate is conducive to broad leaved specimens, so we need to show warmth, empathy . The counterpart of heat in the christian life, is warmth and understanding, and love for God is love; and perfect love casts out fear.
4. Space.....we all need space.. underneath the huge spreading beech tree, there is no space or light, and literally nothing can grow under a beech tree.. similarly in our own lives, there are those people who just take over, leaving no space for others... and this leads to others being stunted with their talents, and even worse cause anger in their lives. Jesus made reference to this in the parable of the sower and the seed. He emphasised, how, in the growth of some plants they were actually choked out by competition from others (Mtt. Ch13,v.7,22)
5. Minerals.... No sorry not drink, but the root system depends upon organic and inorganic matter, or in lay terms minerals and humus. Minerals have their origins in the weathering of the rock, the bedrock upon which the soil exists. Glaciation, flooding, wind erosion, and other forces, thus forming an important part of the tree's total environment. Mineral content contributing a huge factor to the growth of the tree....beech on chalk and clay, pines and firs on peaty, acid soils. Yet it is no accident or chance that the cedars of Lebanon are huge in size and shape, but grow on the mineral rich mountains of Syria. The tireless roots of the forest giants penetrate the honey-combed soil on the mountains, drawing from it minerals which build up the very tissues and fibres of the timber, their roots bound up with the very soil upon which they grow.
What a picture for our church.... Rooted and grounded in our Saviour's LOVE.
AMEN.