



INTRODUCTION

The readings today deal with situations of confusion. Being a follower of Jesus does not remove us from emotional pain and suffering.

✘ PSALM FOR THE DAY IS PSALM 13

The Psalm tells us that a good and righteous person can feel lost and in despair. Lament is a wish that things were not the way they are – it is our heart and voice crying out in the passion of grief and sorrow: four times the Psalmist says *How long?* He feels forgotten as if God was hiding from him – he was not at peace and felt sad.

So what does he do? He makes what we could call a leap of faith – he prays to God to look on him and answer (v3) - and no answer is mentioned – so he says *I will trust* (v5), *I will rejoice and I will sing* (v6). Is he simply ignoring the reality? No, I think he remembers the past as he talks about God's *unfailing love; his salvation* and declares that *he has been good to me*. Look to the bigger picture. The way things are now are not the way they have always been. Remember correctly.

✘ OLD TESTAMENT READING Genesis 22.1-14 **WHAT A STORY!**

God tested Abraham ... Take your son, **your only son, whom you love** and go to the region of Moriah. **Sacrifice him there** ... ³ **Early the next morning Abraham got up** ... **We will worship and then we will come back to you.** ⁶ ... **As the two of them went on together,** ⁷ **Isaac spoke up** and said to his father Abraham, 'Father?' 'Yes, my son?' **Abraham replied.** 'The fire and wood are here,' Isaac said, '**but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?**' ⁸ **Abraham answered,** '**God himself will provide the lamb** ... **And the two of them went on together.** ⁹ **When they reached the place** ... He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, ... ¹¹ **But the angel of the LORD called out to him** ... ¹² 'Do not lay a hand on the boy,' **he said.** 'Do not do anything to him. **Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.**' ¹³ ... he saw a ram ... and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ **So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, 'On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.'**

✧ A big choice .. but why? It is to do with priorities – it is Christ above all – or the Old Testament equivalent!.

✧ Abraham trusted God and his response to the test shows his confidence. This was before the provision of the ram (not a lamb) – *the Lord himself will provide a lamb* – people have taken this as a prophecy about the coming of Jesus, who was called by John 'The Lamb of God'.

✧ He did not fear because he trusted a God who is love – perfect love casts out fear. Abraham might well have said, 'I don't understand what God is doing, but I will trust him'.

✧ Because he put God first. Choosing the right priorities leads to blessing – putting God first leads to blessing. Sacrifice does not appear sacrifice when it leads to blessing

✧ Obedience is one of the key values of walking with God.

✘ NEW TESTAMENT READING Romans 6.12-23

✧ **We are to live in the freedom of God. What Is True Freedom?** It is not license, but the ability to do what is right and good ... to do the sort of things mentioned in our Gospel reading. Freedom is not doing what I want – freedom is being able to live the way God created us to be. ¹² **Therefore do not let sin reign** ...



¹³ *Do not offer any part of yourself to sin ... , but rather offer yourselves to God ...and offer every part of yourself to him ...*

✠ In these days there is much talk of the history slavery. This passage suggests that slavery is part of our being. ¹⁵ *whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death or to obedience, which leads to righteousness*: We are either slaves to our ways or slaves to God's ways. **Our ways include:**

- keeping other people in slavery whether as people as in historic slavery – and it is estimated that there are more slaves today than ever in history,
- men or even other women treating women as chattels,
- a culture of putting money first, a culture of drugs in its negative extremes and of rampant consumerism and the resultant debt in its acceptable face

✠ **The glorious alternative** is in v17: *you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.* ¹⁸ *You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.* Thus Jesus could say in: Matthew 10 ⁴⁰ *'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.* ⁴¹ ... ⁴² *And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.'* Doing our faith is as important as believing our faith because in the Bible there is no real believing if there is no doing. Of course, we cannot be naive about the difficulties in applying these verses, but the challenges are not a reason for inaction. Jesus says: Welcome the stranger, the prophet, the righteous one. Christ expects us to do what he says.

Finale

One of the key memory verses I learned as a boy was Romans 6:23:

²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Eternal life in the Bible is not simply a thing of the future ... it is a gift of God for right now. We are to celebrate God's gift of a life of quality and depth – a life marked by the kingdom – a life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

