

Sunday 11 August 2013

Isaiah 1: 1, 10-20;

Hebrews 11: 1-3, 8-16;

Luke 12: 32-40

TRUST

Rev. Helen Paget

Picture the story, your parents are away at a wedding, they may or may not be home tonight (but most likely not until the very early hours of the morning at least), and you are left at home to look after the place, they are trusting you to keep the place upright and standing in their absence. They haven't exactly said you *couldn't* have some friends over, or something like that, but they also haven't said you *could*, and it is usual for you to obtain permission before organising social occasions at home, even if you know you are always given permission. Now we have all heard the stories in the media about party invitations which went viral and the police were called, and I am not suggesting anything you are planning will degrade into that sort of situation, but, what do you do, or more importantly what would you like to do if you were game enough to do it. Would you just sit at home with the television or a book on your own and wait for your parents' return, would you invite some friends over for a quiet gathering and then after cleaning up, just sit and talk. Would you plan something bigger, but still relatively sedate, and make sure that even if your parents arrived home before you thought they would, your soiree was not so outlandish that it would upset them?

In our Gospel, we are encouraged to be like the servants who, having been left at home in charge of the house, are ready with lamps lit for the return of the master. They have been trusted to look after the place, and when the master returns and finds them waiting for him, he is so grateful that he dons an apron, sits them at table and serves them. Wow. Our Gospel speaks about always being ready; always being ready for your parents to arrive home at any time because you do not know at what hour they will arrive. 'Be always ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour'. But the gospel also speaks about trust, the kind of trust that the master had in these servants. But also the kind of trust that the servants had that the master would return and continue to care for them. The kind of trust God has in you, and me, has in all of us, that we will know how to live our lives and also our trust in God.

So what does trust look like. What does it mean to think that God trusts me to look after what I have been given. And what does it look like that I trust God to provide for me. Or put another way, what does my faith in God mean for me, and what does God's faith in me look like. Our second reading gives us some clues. Abraham trusted God when he was promised descendants as many as the grains of sand, and let's not forget Abraham was 99 and Sarah was 90 at the time. Then God asked him to pack up his family, all he owned and travel to the unknown and settle there, and live in tents as aliens in the land. But at all times, Abraham had faith that God would protect him, that God had a plan and this plan included Abraham doing this thing. He trusted that God would eventually let Abraham see a better land, a heavenly one. Abraham was always ready for whatever God had in mind for him.

I would like to read a piece to you written by a man who went to spend some time with Mother Theresa in Calcutta, seeking some answers in his life. He writes :-

when I spent a month working at the "house of the dying" in Calcutta, I sought a sure answer to my future. On the first morning I met Mother Teresa after Mass at dawn. She asked, "And what can I do for you?" I asked her to pray for me. "What do you want me to pray for?" I voiced the request I

had borne thousands of miles: “Pray that I have clarity.” She said no. That was that. When I asked why, she announced that clarity was the last thing I was clinging to and had to let go of. When I commented that she herself had always seemed to have the clarity I longed for, she laughed: “I have never had clarity; what I’ve always had is trust. So I will pray that you trust.” Thus Mother Teresa became for me a member of that cloud of witnesses to which the Letter to the Hebrews refers: heroes of faith, who had conviction about things unseen.

We have heard that letter to the Hebrews today in our second reading.

Trust, or faith, means I have to rely on someone else for all or part of my life’s outcomes. And that can be a very scary thing to do. To surrender control for all or part of my life to someone else is very unsettling. I know, because I used to like to keep very good control of everything that was happening around me. Other people (apparently including my family) would probably have called me a control freak, but I didn’t see it that way, of course. But, you know what, I found I couldn’t do it, try as I might, I couldn’t control what happened in my life, and that only made my efforts for control even stronger. But then one day (probably not quite that quickly, but eventually) I realised that I didn’t need to control everything, some things, most things, I could just let happen knowing, or trusting, or having faith, that it would all happen the way it should and that God’s plan would eventuate rather than my plan. God asked Abraham to remember and trust the love and promise God had shown him. God gave Abraham a promise, a promise that his descendents would be innumerable, and a promise that he would one day see a better place. We have all been given a promise, a promise that we too will one day see a better place. We have been given a promise that God is always with us and that God has our best interests in mind in all that we are asked and led to do in our lives. We are asked to remain faithful, to trust God, even in the face of all that the world throws at us. We are asked to trust God even when it seems that where we are being led is really not where we think the world would prefer us to go. Remember God’s trust in you. Remember love. Trust in return. In the words of our Gospel, *‘do not be afraid little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom’*. But be warned, receiving the kingdom will change our lives, change the way we do things, change the way we think, change the way we respond to people and situations, change the way we decide what and how we will do in our lives. It changes the way we treat those we meet in our lives, our neighbour, the traveller, the stranger. Look at our first reading, *‘learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow’*; receiving the kingdom does not come without sacrifice and effort, but it is effort and sacrifice that is worth every ounce. We may imagine faith as something which will ease our confusion, dull our pain, but if we do, we have missed the message we heard in our Hebrews reading. Faith does not bring final clarity, it does not disarm the demons, or settle the chaos; it will not dull the pain or provide the crutch which helps us to keep walking. When everything around us seems blurred and uncertain, the heart of faith says “into your hands, I commend my spirit”.