## Ministry Musings (25th June 2017)

God works in mysterious ways but he always works for our good and to show us His unconditional love. Some of the Old Testament is hard to understand in this light and especially when we hear chunks of text out of context from the whole accounts! Today we need to know that in response to the evil they were suffering under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar God had told Jeremiah and other prophets that Judah should submit to Is destructive rule as although this would be humbling to Judah it would be preferable to resisting him and therefore continuing to disobey God!

To show their submission God commanded Jeramiah to make wooden Yokes for himself and various kings to wear. Inevitably there were many who were not ready to repent and return to God and thus we have the account of Hananiah, the false prophet. Breaking the yoke of Babylon symbolises and Jeremiah's sarcastic response to Hananiah neatly calls his bluff and challenges him! God's way historically is not to give prophecies of calm and peace but those of chaos and Destruction unless the people return to Him. Hananiah misses the sarcasm and the reality of God's pattern of working sadly leading to the nations continuing to go their own way for many more years. Christ of course turns this upside down ~

"For my yoke is easy and my burden is light".

Those words come at the end of a series the teachings that reveal the differences between Gods love and the worlds self-centredness and how we should all strive to live by and share God's love. We can only follow Jesus' example if we are not tied by the world but by God's Word and the Holy Spirit. Paul tries to explain this in his letter to the Romans.

How can you live by and share God's love day to day in family

life, your place in the community and beyond?

Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known



## Ministry Musings (2nd July 2017)

Last week I put any mistakes on our Open Door down to the heat-wave ~ when I came to write this weeks musings I discovered the biggest mistake of all ~ I had checked this week's readings and not last week's to write about! That's what can happen when you are entering two weeks readings on one document! So if you wondered why there were pictures of wooden yokes and notes that did not relate to the readings ~that's why! (if you missed them then they are on the reverse of this insert!). You graciously haven't pointed it out to me ~thank you ~ but that got me to thinking! Last week in the sermon I asked

"If we can pray and then ignore that our prayers will be answered what are we capable of doing with our scripture which we consider to be the Word of God and our guide to His outrageous and unconditional love?"

I presume that you have not commented on my deliberate mistake last week out of graciousness ~ but what if it is because you didn't notice ~ because you had listened but not heard the readings ~ because you have got into the habit of switching off when they are read and are not in the habit of following them in the church Bible?

In last week's readings we heard Jeremiah complaining that he felt the Lord had deceived him ~ you can see why when he is given tasks like challenging Hananiah! He had to keep a level head, be rational and speak the words God gave him ~ even if they did go over Hananiah's head ~ because the truth in what Jeremiah said would expose Hananiah for what he was!

This week we are asked by Paul to offer ourselves to God for His work because we believe in Him through Christ. We are asked not to continue sinning when we recognise the sin.

As God's children, when we try to know our Lord better we are rewarded in by finding new things out about His love for us ~ Matthew affirms this in the two verses of our Gospel today. Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known



Jeremiah 28: 5-9 OT page 742, Romans 6:12–23 NT page 152, Matthew 10:40-42 NT page 10

This morning I am going to repeat a question that I ask you in last week's sermon ~ and I have commented on in this week's musings ~ it is this

"If we can pray and then ignore that our prayers will be answered what are we capable of doing with our scripture which we consider to be the Word of God and our guide to His outrageous and unconditional love?"

We are going to do some work together on this ~

First ~ sit and think about just how outrageous and unconditional God's love is ~ how outrageous has it been for you this week and for your family and friends. The experience might have been really small and almost insignificant if it hadn't reminded you of God's presence! Tell your neighbour!

**Second** ~ Whatever you have thought of ~ can you think of a scripture that tells you to expect that unconditional love ~ or affirms or confirms the experience that you have had?

**Third** ~ we are going to hold what we have shared before God and pray

Lord, We are not going to worry or feel inadequate about what we have shared ~ but thank you that you have revealed to us through your Spirit just how easy it is to recognise or to ignore you in our everyday activities. We pray that you will help us to tune in to your presence with us more naturally and find you in everyone and everything. Amen.

Now, last week we heard that Jeremiah the prophet found himself unable to recognise God's presence in his life ~ (and he was a prayerful and practiced prophet) ~ so if he could miss God then how good is it that we are even blessed with a small glimpse? This week, having rediscovered how to see God's presence in everything again he finds himself confronting Hananiah. Hananiah is a false prophet ~ he is speaking what the people want to hear and not in away that the Lord usually addresses issues with the people. Jeremiah needs to reveal this false teaching to the people.... to point out that their scripture

or spoken tradition does not affirm or confirm what they are experiencing ~ the Lord has always used His prophets to tell of disasters that will prevent peace if the people continue to go their own way ~ but they are listening to the prophets telling them of peace without them turning back to God ~ restoration without Responsibility or repentance! Jeremiah invites the people to test the validity of the prophets by whether these prophecies come true or not! How do you test what is of God and what is not? Paul writes

"Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires."

Do you see God at work in the aftermath of the London atrocities and the Grenfell House fire or are all you see the disasters and not what follows? The sinful world cannot see beyond the hurt and pain, the faithful community responds to that hurt and pain by being there, in words and in action. Those experiences are part of our everyday life ~ how we respond indicates the depth of our faithfulness and as a means of challenging us to deepen that relationship further. We are praying as a community and as Individuals. Some of you have been actively involved in collecting or sorting all the aid that has been donated: the surplus of which will be sold to raise funds to continue to help. Some of you will buy from the charity shops being the outlets for those sales. God asks each of us to respond differently ~ but respond we must. Some will contribute to the foodbank ~ oh yes, we have changed our collection bin to encourage you not to throw your rubbish in it!

What is your response ~ do you stay with the Jeremiah who only sees the material bad around him or the refreshed man who sees God present and shares with others how to do the same? Listen again to what Matthew records Jesus as saying

"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. 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." Amen.