

## Pentecost 3 – St Aidan’s – 29<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Readings: Psalm 13 ‘A Psalm of Lament’  
Matthew 10: 40-42 ‘The gift of hospitality’

### Introduction

Today we will look at the Psalm and the Gospel separately and spend a few minutes on each and divide the readings with a hymn as both deserve to be looked at but in many ways are separate themes and issues and are not linked. It is also appropriate that after the Psalm we have a time of prayer for others as the Psalm calls us to pray not only for ourselves but for others also with needs in their lives. So let us firstly look at the Psalm.

### Psalm 13

Psalm 13 is ascribed as a Psalm of David. It is a cry to the Lord for deliverance from a serious illness that threatens death which would give David’s enemies just what they wanted. This appeal to God by David puts this psalm in the category of a “lament”. There are more than 40 Psalms of Lament and these are characterised by having two main aspects.

The first is the prayer of lament or petition to God. In this part God is implored to heal, to make right a wrong situation or to protect an individual or community. Hence a lament expresses a person’s deepest needs. It is essentially a prayer addressed to God by a person afflicted by some calamity or by someone who is in a disastrous situation, expressing sorrow about their situation and appealing to God for deliverance.

The ‘laments’ reflect the totality of life and describe life as it really is. The Psalms of ‘lament’ acknowledge that life does not consist of prosperity only, but that it has pain, grief, darkness and evil. The laments illustrate that it is not wrong or an act of unbelief to complain to God about misfortune or illness or distress or family troubles and so forth. The Psalms of Lament give voice to our own situations today and as such are ageless as they speak to the problems we still have today. A different setting but issues of power, greed, pain and loss.

In Psalm 13 David feels a distance between himself and God. The words, “How long” are used to evoke the thought that God has forgotten, been hidden from and not protected David. There is the fear of impending death. There is the request to “Give light to my eyes....” which implies life, hope and a future. A person with no light in their eyes is seen as close to death. The imagery in this psalm is quite remarkable. Then the second aspect of a Psalm of Lament is an aspect quite unexpected. When all seems hopeless and lost there comes this sudden faith statement, this hope in God and praise of God.

In Psalm 13 this is found in verses 5 and 6:

“But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me.”

It seems almost incongruous to the preceding lament to and against God. Yet faith is still alive in spite of the doubts, the grumbles and the complaints against God. There are times in all our lives when we want to rant against God. “Why me Lord – why have you allowed this to occur to me or my family or my friend?” ‘How long are you going to allow this to continue?’ Then comes the thanks, the praise and sometimes even rejoicing when things change and we again are able to see the goodness of the Lord.

### Let us pray

1. Firstly for the struggles we have in life. Also for those with specific needs that we know about today.
2. Secondly, a time of thanks and praise to God for his goodness to us and those around about us.

Hymn 123 “Be still my soul: the Lord is on your side”

### Matthew 10:40-42

These few verses come at the end of Jesus’ discourse as he sends the disciples out into the world “..and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” Matt 10:1b

Yet the few verses we have for our Gospel today speak not of the mission of the disciples but the challenge of hospitality and welcome as a result of faithful discipleship. In these verses at the end of Matthew 10 we are encouraged to think more deeply about what is meant by welcoming one another. In these verses our theological focus is on compassionate welcome or hospitality.

Compassionate welcome means approaching each other through God. This is how we recognise that genuine human relationships emerge from putting the grace filled hospitality of God’s love at the centre of our lives and at the centre of all our relationships. God’s hospitality teaches us that close, loving, enduring relationships are to be valued along with distant, occasional and abrasive ones – as difficult as the latter ones may be. This lively, and sometimes maddening dynamics the welcome Jesus speaks of in today’s passage. Further, if we live into this welcome with each other, we will find the rich rewards of discipleship found in God.

One of the joys for me last Sunday at Wesley was welcoming new people into both the 9am and 10.30am services. While we struggled at the 9am service due to quite a number being away with sickness, there was a good number to welcome at the later service. However the real joy was in the hospitality over the ‘welcome lunch’. Some 43 people had put their names down to attend. We had enough food for 100 plus. Those organising the lunch had gone to a lot of trouble and I gave an open invitation over morning tea for people, who wished, to stay on for lunch. The friendship and fellowship was a delight and guess how many we had for lunch – almost 100. There was the welcome, the hospitality of Christ at that luncheon with people commenting what a delightful time they had. It was done in the name of Christ and people felt welcomed and all shared together. Fantastic!

### Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have chosen us, even in our limitations and our inadequacies, to be your disciples, representatives and ambassadors of your reign. We are sometimes astounded by your faith in us. You have entrusted so much to our care and invested so much in us, even your own life. Teach us the joy of true hospitality in your name, even though we may be just a small group.

Through Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.