

30/8/2020 Trinity 12.

Lucie Bell.

Cost of Discipleship.

Ps.119, 105: *Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.*

Heavenly Father send your Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds to your truths, and to encourage us to walk in your ways. We ask in Jesus` Name. **Amen.**

In reflecting on today`s readings of God`s Word, what is lit up? In Jeremiah and Jesus, we see that wholesale allegiance to God involves suffering.

OT. Jeremiah 15, 15-21.

Jeremiah was chosen by God before he was born and he prophesied over 40 years up to and beyond the fall of Jerusalem. God`s Words gave him joy and delight, but continual pain and suffering when rejected by Israel`s leaders. In anguish he called out to God who promised to make him as strong as a fortified wall to resist their attacks. God would be with him to deliver him, which indeed we know He did!

In Ch.31, 33 God cheers up Jeremiah with a prophecy of a new covenant to come:

I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people....they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest, the LORD declared, For I will forgive their wickedness, and remember their sin no more.

Sin had separated humankind from their loving Creator since the first people rebelled against our holy God. By obeying the voice of God`s enemy the devil, they left the delightful personal relationship they had enjoyed with God and chose to follow their own fleshly desires. Thus sin and death and selfish corruption entered the world.

God yearned for reconciliation. He made a way through a series of covenants or contracts to forgive sin. These involved the shedding of blood of a sacrifice; the giving of life to save life. This ratified promises: God would purify, forgive, their sins as long as they loved and obeyed Him in keeping His orders. He would bless and protect and prosper them.

Years after covenants with Noah and Abraham, God rescued the nation of Israel from slavery and death in Egypt by the blood sacrifice of a pure lamb. He set up a detailed covenant system of worship and sacrifices through His servant Moses: the Mosaic Law. The people were to be a holy nation set apart for a holy God from all other nations.

This system set up about 1500BC, apart from 70 years in exile, continued till AD70, when the Temple was destroyed.

But that system failed. How was God to save the world? It needed a Superman, a wonderful Divine sinless Man to come to the rescue!

Our NT reading comes in the run up to the fulfilling of Jeremiah's prophecy.

NT. Matthew 16, 21-28.

Our great Rescuer, Jesus, God's only Son, is on his way with his disciples to Jerusalem. It follows a turning point in their relationship with Jesus their Teacher. Peter had just made the great confession on behalf of them all, that they now realised for themselves that Jesus was indeed the longed-for Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Their expectation was of a powerful leader who would free Israel from Roman oppression by force.

However, God's plan was completely different. His Messiah was Isaiah's suffering obedient Servant, the Spotless Lamb of God, who was destined to take away the sins of the whole world, not just those of Israel. Jesus told them He would die horribly on the cross to suffer the punishment due to us sinners, so satisfying God's wrath and reconciling God and mankind together for all time. This suffering of Jesus would be the labour pains to bring to birth a new covenant, with a new body born 3 days later from the resurrected corpse!

When Peter objected to this utterly different Messiah, Jesus told him he needed to change his mindset, which was of Satan's kingdom. Jesus highlights the continual spiritual battle between God and the devil. Jesus was on his way to defeat sin and death God's way. The disciples found it incomprehensible until enlightened by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

All of us who have given our lives to Jesus, and are born again into his kingdom, enter this same spiritual battle with popular ideas and pressures. How we do will be reckoned up, Jesus said, when He comes in glory with his angels. His last words in v. 28 tell the disciples that they will see Him in the new kingdom after his resurrection.

To Conclude.

How does this apply to us? Are we frustrated with lockdown? Noah and his family of 7 were cramped in lockdown with countless smelly creatures for a year and 10 days! After that they entered a new world and new promises ratified with the sign of the rainbow.

Jeremiah was in confinement cast into a stinking pit.

The disciples were locked in for fear of arrest after the crucifixion, and in agonising grief till Easter changed everything.

In our reading, Jesus tells us to deny our own desires and submit to His. He refuses no one who comes to Him. When invited into our lives, He forgives confessed sin and cleanses us. We belong to Him, bought by His precious blood at great cost. Jesus comes into our hearts

and minds by his Holy Spirit, Who strengthens and enlightens us and fulfils Jeremiah`s prophecy bringing great joy and happiness. By His grace we are gradually changed to be like Him until we meet Him in glory face to face!

That`ll be the day! Alleluia!

Let`s Pray. *From AW Tozer.*

O Lord, Thank you for Jesus.

Give us His grace day by day to give up our lives to spending time with You,

To give You our devotion, skills and energies,

And to make Christ attractive to others.

Save us from wasting time and from pleasing ourselves with worldly temptations.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit to please You at this time of lockdown.

We ask all this in Jesus` precious Name. **Amen.**