

Post Trinity Sermon Series #2 St. John 05.06.16

*Faithful God,
let your word be the treasure of our hearts,
that we may delight in your truth
and walk in the glorious liberty of your Son Jesus Christ*

When men and women get their hands on religion, one of the first things they often do is to turn it into an instrument for controlling others, i.e. keeping them in their place. The history of the world is filled with stories of such manipulation. *The Message Introduction to Galatians*

Last week, when we were introduced to the sermon series on Galatians, we were reminded that the first people who heard the Good News were faithful Jews who were hearing it and accepting it for themselves. It was these faithful Jews who initially took the message into the wider world, to the pagans. The result was that there arose tension between the two groups of believers. The ones who came from a Jewish background of obedience to the LAW, and those who came from differing traditions and so were considered by some Jews as outside the faith. Them & US

Galatians is a letter that seeks to defuse these tensions.

In the first of the readings today, the first 5 verses of the letter, Paul sets out his credentials

- He is an 'Apostle of God'
- The message he presents is from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ

An Apostle is a messenger who can be relied upon to deliver a message EXACTLY as given; in days before the instantaneous messaging.

Paul is claiming to be delivering God's word, through the good news as given by Jesus Christ. It is Not Paul's interpretation of that good news. Anything the Galatians are told which is in any way conflicts with what he says, is not from Jesus.

In short, Paul claims he is the messenger from Jesus the Messiah and God the Father. Those who reject the message are not rejecting Paul, but Jesus himself.

The first verse of the second reading addresses us directly. We may not be living in Galatia, but we do live in a world where we are subjected to a mass of information, most of which can be contradictory. *Offer an example.*

The issue of who speaks for God, and how we can truly know what God is saying to us, remains today. Think of the way the worldwide Anglican Communion is being torn apart by those who are so sure that God's will coincides with their own. This is when we truly need to exercise HUMILITY

Paul addresses us directly, when he asks, 'Am I seeking human approval or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people?' (v10). He is asking us to consider, evaluate, and reason through prayer, what others may be saying or writing to us about the will of God. It is perhaps too easy for us to turn away from a Biblical truth, and look for guidance from another source which may be easier to understand, without asking first, if that is truly a message from God.

Paul's message is very relevant to us, today.

Paul proclaims that his message is about Jesus "*who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age*" (v4), and at the same time he condemns those who would entice and those who would follow a different message of confusion, "*a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed*" (v8).

Although we are exposed and subjected to the world around us, the message that Paul offers, is one of hope, where, although we are living in the world, our life when embedded in Christ, offers us a way of living, that lifts us out of the chaos that surrounds us.

*Father, hearing your voice in our daily busy-ness can be a challenge, but we trust that you are always here with us anyway. Help us to share our experiences of you, with one another and to hear what you are saying to us in the stories around us. **Amen***