

Church Family Newsletter 12th May 2020

Reflection for today from Reader Roy: GIVE THANKS

I suppose that when we look back over our working lives we can all remember some interesting experiences. I remember a long time ago when I was a young solicitor a man came to see me but his English was not very good and so I had to be very careful to establish the relevant facts before I gave him the advice. It all worked out well and at the end of our last meeting he was very appreciative and he said 'I want to thank you' and then he said 'I want to thank you from the heart of my bottom'. As I say his English was not that good but I was very pleased he was satisfied with the help I gave to him.

It was refreshing to see his willingness to show appreciation and I think that is something we ought to do more often. If we show our appreciation for others you never know it might actually catch on! Of course, as Christians we ought to be thankful. Giving thanks to God is a constant feature in the psalms and we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5.18 'give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you'. This tells us the right attitude to adopt and in particular it is an instruction for thanksgiving to be included as a regular feature of our church services.

In our thanksgiving we are calling to mind what God has done for us. In the book of common prayer there is the 'general thanksgiving' which gives thanks to God for 'our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ for the means of grace and for the hope of glory' and it goes on to pray that 'our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful'.

You may come to church feeling on top of the world because you've received some great news or you may come to church feeling that your heart is broken because you have received terrible news. This does not change our profound thanks to God for all his goodness and for our salvation. Our thankfulness does not depend on our feelings or our circumstances. This verse from 1 Thessalonians is not telling us to give thanks for all circumstances but in all circumstances. But we need more help to know how to deal with the bad circumstances.

James chapter 1 and verse 2 says 'Count it all joy my brethren when you meet various trials for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect that you may be perfect and complete lacking in nothing'. James says 'count it all joy' – really? James is realistic. Life is not plain sailing; it is a sequence of good and bad and a lot of it is just pressing on day by day through thick and thin. What James is saying is that in all life's ups and downs God is always working out his purpose in our lives.

I think there are three common reactions to our difficulties:

First – we say 'why did this happen; why me?' This is not good. Do you really want to undertake a detailed analysis to answer the question why? How long will that take? You could be ruminating for months or even years.

Second – we say, 'well I know bad things are bound to happen – we'll just have to live with it'. Getting better – it is always healthy to face reality.

Third – I know the Lord has a purpose in these particular circumstances and that's what I will look for'. Much better!

Let us remember the words of the apostle Paul in Philippians 3.13,14 'One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'.