

Trinity 10, Year A, Proper 13
27 July 2008

1 Kings 3:5-12
Psalm 119:129-136 (9.30 am only)
Romans 8:26-39
Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52

The gospel

Glimpses treasure, buries it, sells all that he has to buy the field where it's buried
Glimpses pearl, sells all that he has to buy it

renunciations – not literally all perhaps, but all that we hold dear, that we think we can't do without
A beautiful home, some possession—there's nothing wrong with having things, it how we regard them
when the problems start. These things limit us, because they blind us to the possibility that things could
be otherwise, and that we might benefit if they were.

Attitudes: Have to do it my way
Anglican communion - intolerance
Even in church: forms of service, particular liturgies, doing the same year in year out.
intolerance of people who disagree with us – this can lead us to do silly things.
What we insist on because we like it may well be something that someone else dislikes.

We are in danger of putting our faith in human creations rather than in

On what? On reason? Certainly not
'Our reason is overwhelmed by so many forms of deceptions ... that it is far from directing us aright.'
Calvin

The OT lesson and the psalm tell us what.
Wisdom, Sophia
Proverbs
Prostitutes. What the adulterous woman took away, Wisdom bestows as permanent gifts.
the substance that is present with God at creation proverbs 8:22
ground of our being
the stardust of the universe out of which we are made
the nature of God
the mediator between God and God's creation
Wisdom/word - JC

It is in us, and we don't know how to get at it. Because we cover it up with layers: postures, pride,
pretence, all in order to make us appear bigger and more attractive-so we think-to show off.

When we insist on something, or feel that something is so important to us that we are willing to ignore
the wishes of others, we need to reflect on why we are being so egotistical.

Personal needs taking precedence over those of the community.

William Blake talks of our having '*mind-forg'd manacles*'. He is identifying our propensity to create and
cling to the chains that rattle behind us. We long for security, but settle for the safety of a high-security
prisoner. It takes grace to show that things do not have to be that way, and even - sometimes - to reveal
that there are any chains there at all.

It could be otherwise.

God does not ask anyone to be crazy or rash or shallow. He asks them to love him with all their heart
and soul and mind. People can love only what they know. In the parable, the man who buys the field with
hidden treasure has already seen the treasure; and the merchant who buys the pearl knows something
about pearls. People start to let go - and should only start to let go - when they understand the freedom
God wants to give them. People should 'sell it all' when they have first begun to comprehend the
beautiful words 'the freedom of the children of God'.

Real self-abandonment can only come with trust in God and learning that trust takes time and humility
and honesty. Any other kind of sacrifice seems unlikely to have much to do with God - it will probably be
egotism or a parody of what sacrifice is about.

There is more than one way to sell what you have (Christ tells two stories, not just one). Anyone one can think of great men and women in history who have made some fantastic and public act of renunciation. Yet there are also very many obscure lives, for the most part hidden, in which everything has been sold (sometimes literally, sometimes not) for the sake of the kingdom. Subsequent generations often live on these people's generosity - whether they know it or not.

To give one tiny example: often churches in England have been paid for by people who could hardly afford it, or who have run up personal debts to pay for the bricks. There have been innumerable generous men and women on whose generosity we have all been reared.

When Christ tells the parables, he is not spinning fairy-tales. He anticipates what would actually happen and what had begun to happen in his days. When this kind of joyful self-surrender stops happening, then people have become strangers to themselves. They have got into serious trouble indeed: their hearts have grown cold.

Heavenly Father, when we think we know best, make us remember that it could be otherwise.

Heavenly Father, when we think something has to be done in the way that suits us, help us to look into our hearts to see why.