

C Proper 15 Year C 2013

Jeremiah 23:23-29
Psalm 82
Hebrews 11:29-12:2
Luke 12:49-56

Psalm 82 (The Message)

God calls the judges into his courtroom, he puts all the judges in the dock.

"Enough! You've corrupted justice long enough, you've let the wicked get away with murder. You're here to defend the defenseless, to make sure that underdogs get a fair break; Your job is to stand up for the powerless, and prosecute all those who exploit them."

Ignorant judges! Head-in-the-sand judges! They haven't a clue to what's going on. And now everything's falling apart, the world's coming unglued.

"I commissioned you judges, each one of you, deputies of the High God, But you've betrayed your commission and now you're stripped of your rank, busted."

O God, give them their just deserts! You've got the whole world in your hands!

Sermon

At the moment I'm reading NT in chronological order. Epistles first. Trying to imagine that I'd never heard of the Gospels. It strikes me how *disruptive* and unconventional Jesus was. He talked of Samaritans saving Jewish lives. He praised the father who embraced the son who shamed him. He told people to share things. The soldier in the occupying army was to be accompanied not just the one mile but another mile, unbidden. Religious jobsworths were excoriated. He ate with outcasts, and was accused of being a glutton and a drunkard.

Now look at today's Gospel. Jesus, the most loving person who has ever lived, has hard words for us today. Hard words make soft people. Soft words make hard people.

He says if you're going to be prepared for the weather, get prepared for the judgment. Be more concerned about your eternity than about the weather and the news. Are you going to heaven or hell? Jesus tells us to repent or perish. We all will die and stand before God to give an account for our life.

Do you believe in judgement? Do you even believe in afterlife?

My head leads me to think that there is nothing. And yet, people I know talk of paranormal behaviour, so there must be something. I act as if I believe that one day I shall stand naked before the Lord, and have film of my life played back to me, and be made to take responsibility for myself.

People say: I don't know if there is a God. I don't know if there is a hell. I don't know if you're right. If there isn't, and you behave as Jesus says, you've lost nothing. If there is and you don't, you've lost everything. You're gambling with your eternal destiny. You're gambling with hell.

Repent or perish. Repentance is not just something that you do once. It's what you do to grow. Every day. Repent: confession, contrition, change. A clearing out of the soul.

This clearing out process is the way to peace. It brings division. Peace is not niceness. Peace is hard work. There will never be peace without justice. Fighting against injustice is love in action, for it leads to peace. If you have an abscess, you don't put an elastoplast on it. You get the knife out. True peace, *shalom*, wholeness, security, is not a convenient, insipid calm. It requires the clearing out of the abscess. Working for peace always brings division and lands one in trouble. It always offends the complacent and self-centred. And they, of course, choose to be offended. Jesus didn't want to leave them behind, but they wanted not to be with him.

This is the church militant. Not the church hesitant, Not the church petulant, but the church militant.

Jesus talks of the need to be fired-up, to have fire in the belly.

Fire burns rubbish and makes things malleable.

How do we reignite the flame of passion toward God? Well, there's no secret. There's just discipline in a number of areas.

- Community. The light in a glow-worm comes from millions of luminescent bacteria – one alone is invisible, but when they act together it is a different story.
- Scripture
- Prayer

- Worship
- Giving
- Serving
- Obedience – discipline like training for sport.

Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.