

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : August 16th, 2020
“Tenth Sunday after Trinity”

TRINITY 10 16 August 2020

A little bit of arm exercise this morning. Can you put up your hand if:

- You have ever belonged to the Scout/Guide Movement? *Everyone else has not.*
 - You have ever been to college or university? *Everyone else has not.*
 - If you wear glasses? *Everyone else does not.*
 - If you take sugar in tea or coffee? *Everyone else does not.*

What of course we will have noticed is that every time we put our hand up and become a member of the group, there were others who were excluded.

In the book of Genesis, at the very beginning, God made a promise to Abraham. God promised that he would make his family into a great nation and that all the people on earth would be blessed by this nation. And that promise came true – all the descendants of Abraham did indeed become a great nation and the people of Israel (as they became known) were rightly proud of being God’s chosen people. But, a bit like the different groups this morning, they thought that everyone else was outside and not included. They called the outsiders ‘Gentiles’. But that was only the first part of God’s promise.

The second part was this “that all the people on earth would be blessed by this nation”. So, from the start, God wanted all people to have that special friendship with him that Abraham had. From the start, God clearly says that he isn’t just for a few people – He is for everyone. With God not one person is to be left ‘on the outside’. It is why the tenacious faith of the outsider (the Canaanite woman), shown by her perseverance and trust and hope in the face of strong opposition, is so remarkable in our Gospel story today. God’s love is always broader than we think – this is the message of the Gospel, where even Jesus seems to be surprised at finding faith in one from whom he did not expect it.

So, it follows that if God wants everyone in his kingdom, then we must make sure that in our loving care, we don't leave people out. Think about that. Are there people we deliberately avoid? Do we assume some people aren't worth bothering with? Would we rather some people weren't part of the Church? "Can I come into your Church?" is a frequent question I am asked. I always have to remind people that it's everyone's Church, that God always want those 'outside' to come in – and we must never forget that truth. Uniquely, God's Church is for all and we must do all we can to ensure that is a reality. We thank God that it is his love that has brought each one of us here and he still has lots of love for all those others who need us to show it to them and love them into the kingdom. As we build up confidence for people to return to worship, let that be our prayer in both word and action. Amen.