

Jude ?

28 10 12

Almighty God,
who built your Church upon the foundation
of the apostles and prophets,
with Jesus Christ himself as the chief cornerstone:
so join us together in unity of spirit by their doctrine,
that we may be made a holy temple acceptable to you

My text can be found in the Letter of Jude, its concluding verses:

'Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.'

It's good to be back again with you. It's kind as ever of Father Richard to invite me to preach. Most of you know Father Richard and I were teachers at Davenant Foundation School in Loughton. Many of you will know that Father Richard was a pupil at Raine's Foundation School in Stepney. But how many of you, I wonder, know that as a boy, Father Richard attended St Jude's Primary School in the Elephant and Castle. Obscure or what ?

And today on the feast of St Simon and St Jude I like to briefly turn my attention to Jude, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus and one of the apostles sent out to

witness to the truth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Word incarnate, our Lord and Saviour, that Jesus has risen from the dead so that we too will one day rise like Jude from the dead to be members of the household of God.

What has Jude and Bartholomew, in whose memory my church in Dinard is dedicated, got in common ? In Scripture, they both have more than one name. Bartholomew is also called Nathaniel. Jude is also called Judas, Thaddeus and Lebbaeus. Now softening his name by shortening it is quite understandable given that the other Judas – Judas Iscariot – was the disciple who betrayed Jesus and no one would want to confuse the two. Thaddeus may well be his surname, as Matthew suggests. Lebbaeus is only found in the King James Bible and may well be a later insertion in the text. Curiously, both Thaddeus and Lebbaeus mean warm-hearted and generous.

So who was Jude ? Well, he was one of the Twelve as I said, but is he the author of today's text taken from the very short Letter written in his name, the 21st Epistle in the New Testament which you'll find just before the Book of Revelation ? Probably not if you are to believe William Barclay. Barclay, in his commentary on the Letter of Jude, sets out the case clearly and on balance he thinks that the Jude in question is more likely to be the brother of Jesus rather than the Apostle.

So why is Judas important to us today ? He is not famous for what he said or for what he did like Peter or John. He didn't write a gospel like Matthew, Mark or Luke. He did not embark on well documented Missionary journeys like Paul and Barnabas. What he did was to be with Jesus to accept him as Lord and Saviour and

to do what Jesus asked him to do: to be a witness to the truth of the gospel, the good news that Jesus is God incarnate and that through him, we can come to a new, living and loving relationship with God. Jude is important to us because he represents the host of unsung Christians like you and me who quietly get on with the job of being a Christian where we are, spreading the light by being the people we are. Jude is a hero of the faith because, like us, he never made the headlines as a celebrity but his work was nonetheless vital and important for those whose lives he touched and changed.

And to conclude – the one fact you all probably know about St Jude – that he is the patron saint of lost causes, the saint to whom people pray only when they are truly desperate, on the slender grounds that given his name that might be confused with that of the infamous Judas, most people wouldn't bother him with their prayers so he was more likely to have the time to answer our prayer !

But whatever you believe, believe this: Jude can be a real source of encouragement to ordinary folk like you and me, just like in fact your own patron saint, St Barnabas.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist
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H: Sermon 26 : Jude

