

Salt, light, being right

9 2 14

O God,
you know us to be set
in the midst of so many and great dangers
that by reason of the frailty of our nature
we cannot always stand upright:
grant to us such strength and protection,
as may support us in all dangers
and carry us through all temptations.

Our text today may be found in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 9:

‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the human heart conceived,
what God has prepared for those who love him’.

Have you ever wondered what heaven may be like ? I guess we might have when we were young. I guess we might now we are old. Youngsters are much given to the delight of imagination, to creative flights of fancy. For older folk, like most of us here today, heaven may feel a lot closer than it did when we were young.

So what do you think it might be like when eventually we die ? *(Here David Norris quoted Sidney Smith – eating pâté de foie gras to the sound of trumpets – and Diana Wilson suggested being with 200 of her dogs !)* A helpful starting-point

might be the statement we say each week in the Nicene Creed: 'We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come'. The Apostles Creed puts it slightly differently: 'the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come.' What both tell us clearly is our faith is strongly rooted in the fact that death is not the end and that, in some sense, we will survive the grave, embodied with our individual identity intact. Later, in the same epistle as today's text, in the 15th chapter, Paul writes passionately about the centrality of our belief in the resurrection, not only that of Christ himself but of all people and helpfully in verse 44, Paul mentions the idea of 'a spiritual body'. Sadly, we are not sure exactly what that might entail but the prospect of being embodied without the pain and the indignities of the flesh is an exciting thought. In the Book of Revelation, John writes of the New Jerusalem with God at its centre. In chapter 21 and verses 3 & 4, we read:

See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away.

For me, heaven will be the chance to meet up with the people I loved here on earth and who loved me, and to have an adult conversation with my father.

life after death is a great prospect but for the present, we are in the present and in today's gospel, there are three pointers as to how we should be living our life on earth in the here and now. So let's end today's sermon by looking at three principles for the good life: salt, light and being right.

In today's gospel from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares that 'You are the salt of the earth'. I love it. We should be folk who give flavour to life. By who we are, by what we do, we should make life that much tastier by our presence. We are here to make life the better for our presence. And there are two other qualities salt possesses: curative and preservative. Bathing your eye in salt water or washing a wound with salt may sting but it can get rid of an infection. And if you want to preserve the shelf-life of food, you can salt it – salt beef is just one example. So we as Christians can, by what we do and say, help things last by curing and preserving where possible, where appropriate.

In today's gospel from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states that 'You are the light of the earth.' A lamp is lit to light up a room and our task is to make things clear, to illuminate, to show the way to go, the path to take. Christians are mirrors to reflect the light of Christ in a world darkened by selfishness and sin, greed and insensitivity. We have come to give light and to lighten the lives of those we meet.

In today's gospel from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges us to be 'righteous'. Being righteous means living a life informed by true Christian principles. For the righteous Jew, it meant living a life shaped by the ethical

teachings of the Torah. Here, Jesus challenges us to outdo even the Pharisees in right living. Jesus wants us all to be right and to persist in being right so that by being right, we can rightly encourage others by our example.

So there we have three images by which to shape our life: salt, light and being right. Heaven is a delightful prospect at the end of this life. But in the meantime, until we get there, it is a good idea to live this life as best we can. At least, it's worth a try don't you think ?

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

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's, Dinard

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G: Sermons 29 : Salt Light Right

