

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn:

Reading: Isaiah 41. 813

Prayers:

JB Phillips, an Anglican priest wrote some groundbreaking rewritings of parts of the Bible. Some of you may remember his "Letters to Young Churches" which brought the writings of Paul alive when most of us were still reading the Bible in the glorious but sometimes very difficult English of the Authorised Version.

JB Phillips also wrote small books called, "Your God is too small". He had chapters in which he wrote about the way in which many people think about God:

- The old-fashioned schoolmaster who is always telling us that whatever we have done is wrong
- The dotty Great Uncle who can't remember much about us but thinks we're wonderful whatever we do.
- The Policeman who is always trying to catch us out.

Isaiah also gives us pictures of God but his three pictures are very different and suggest a way in which our understanding of God grows:

***You, Israel my servant;
Jacob, who I have chosen;
the offspring of Abraham; my friend..... do not fear!"***

1. He calls Israel, "My servant" When we have any sense of the greatness of God and that we are called to live according to his will we may think of ourselves as his "servants".

We have been given the privilege of being given a share in God's work! If we see ourselves as God's servants then we have begun to discover something important about our relationship with him

2. Isaiah speaks of "Jacob, whom I have chosen."

Do you remember a day when you were "chosen"?

Perhaps you were chosen to play in a sports team, to have a part in a play, to go to college or to be employed in a particular place. It makes us feel proud and delighted.

Isaiah says to the people of Israel that they are a people God has chosen for a special purpose. We often find this idea difficult, partly because we assume that if God chooses one people that he rejects others.

However, the Bible often sees one group of people as being chosen for the sake of all other people. The rest of humanity are chosen to be the people who benefit from what God has first given to others.

God is like the parent who gives a child sweets and tells him or her to share them with all the children in the room.

Christians may hear the words of Peter:

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...”

That’s said to you and me – for the sake of the whole human race!

3. Finally Isaiah speaks of “the offspring of Abraham, my friend.” It may seem extraordinary that God call us frail human beings his friends.

We do hear Jesus saying to the disciples,

“You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

Here we have this very personal language in the Hebrew Scriptures.

God calls us “his friends”, and wants us to see him not as that schoolmaster, dotty great uncle or policeman in the skies, but as his friend.

Good friends care for us, stick by us through success and failure, joy and sorrow, trouble and danger and do not forget us even when we have died.

It’s because God has called us his servants, chosen us to be his people, named us his friends that Isaiah tells the slaves in Babylon that they do not need to be afraid.

Fear is so destructive of hope. Fear isolates us and makes us lonely. Fear makes us miserable.

Isaiah doesn’t tell the slaves in Babylon to “cheer up” as sometimes well-meaning people tell us in the vain hope that will take away our fears. Instead, he helps them to see their lives in a completely new context:

- Of the God who calls them his friends and who promises to be with them on this journey they are undertaking from slavery to freedom.

We may rejoice that in Christ we know that this friendship is eternal and indestructible!

Amen.