

TUESDAY COMMUNION

We remember the past in order that we may live all the more faithfully in the present.

Hymn: 82 Hark the glad sound! The Saviour comes

Reading: Isaiah 43.16-21

Prayers:

Of course, we all look back to the past. Remembrance is a vital part of our personal lives and also a vital part of the life of the Christian community. I've been fascinated by the six part series on Christianity which is just coming to an end. It's told the story of the Christian Church over the last 2,000 years in all its glory and in all its failure!

It's a valuable story. It gives hints as to what it might mean for us to be faithful to Christ in the 21st century and what it might mean to be unfaithful!

In the same way Isaiah remembers the past and the story of how Moses led the People of Israel through the water of the Red Sea. When the Egyptians tried to follow them many were drowned and the defeat of the Egyptians meant that they could go forward in safety. (It's a sad truth that when we give thanks for the safety we enjoy in our own country it is also a result of the death of those we've seen as our enemies.)

Isaiah promises that very soon there will be a new Exodus as great as that which Moses led long before. The God who made the Exodus possible is the God who will lead them out of captivity in Babylon!

The remembrance of how God brought Israel out of Egypt can give them confidence in what God is about to do,

Yet, after these stirring words Isaiah seems to say something contradictory:

***“Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.”***

He urges the people not to live in the past but to live in the present. We remember the past in order that we may live all the more faithfully in the present. The past is important but it can also be a snare to those who want to avoid the danger of being fully alive to the challenges of the here and now.

Perhaps these words of Isaiah are especially true as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. So much of Christmas can be linked to the past:

- We remember the times gone by and those with whom we shared Christmas in days gone by
- We send cards of stage-coaches, we read the stories of Dickens, and we long for a mythical Victorian World with its old securities.
- We read the Christmas story in ways that make it safe and comfortable so that it does not intrude on our present world.

Yet, the challenge to us and to the world is what it means to be faithful to the Christ who comes to us again and again. The Lord to whom we open our lives in our communion this morning does not seek to drag us back into the past but to help us to live as his friends in the present.

There is always a danger when times are hard to dwell more and more in the past. It can happen to us as individuals and it can happen to the church. Certainly we may be thankful for the past, we may learn from the past, but we must not dwell there.

Christ comes to be with us as we face the challenges which affect our world, our communities, our church and our own lives. He comes in the name of the God who is the eternal "I am". He is not "I was" or "I will be" but the God of this moment who comes in love and with loving purpose.

To know through the Child of Bethlehem the height and the depth, length and the breadth of God's love for every person, and to be caught up in the loving purposes of God in this generation is sufficient for us.

We give thanks for all that is past, we trust him for all that's to come, but we are called to live in the here and now.

So with Christ, may we face the challenges that lie before us this day.

Amen.