

TUESDAY COMMUNION
"Listening, encouraging and suffering"

Hymn: 632. Awake, my soul, and with the sun

Reading: Isaiah 50.4-9

Prayers:

Teachers come in all shapes and sizes. You may have had one of those of teachers who has the gift of discouraging you. You soon realised that in his or her eyes you were thick, lazy and beyond hope.

Needless to say, we soon lived up to the full height of their expectations!

But there are other teachers who have the opposite effect.

One might be a very average student but they had the gift

- of enabling us to see what had formerly obscure,
- to understand something which had previously had one baffled,
- to believe that we had the potential to grow in our ability to see and to understand and to become more than we ever dreamt of being.

Isaiah tells of a servant of God who is like those teachers who are blessed with the gift of speaking words of encouragement to their pupils. To the slaves in Babylon the teacher speaks words that give hope, that enable people to see God at work even in captivity to understand that God will fulfil his promise to give freedom to his people.

But the teacher also needs to learn. Morning by morning he wakens, wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. Those who teach also need to be taught, to listen in order that they may speak.

This teacher also speaks out of their own experience of the cost of being faithful to what God is saying to them.

If some experience new insight and understanding through the life and words of their teacher others become hostile and aggressive. This teacher, this servant of God, has been physically maltreated and subject to many taunts.

Yet he believe that what he has said and the way he lives his life are at one with what God wanted of him.

In the end it is the judgement of God that matters:

***“The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced.....
He who vindicates me is near.”***

We've come across Isaiah speaking about a "servant of God" before. This servant may have been the prophet himself or it may be an ideal Israel which has a mission from God but which suffers as it carries out that mission.

Certainly, here, one has the feeling that Isaiah's speaking about an actual individual, maybe himself.....

Christians will inevitably see in this life of one who is both a teacher and someone who listens to God, a person who inspires some but is condemned by others, the person of Jesus.

It's not that Isaiah knew about Jesus but that there are patterns of God's activity which repeat themselves in this world.

Those who are faithful to God, who have the courage to open the eyes and to give new understanding, are condemned by those who don't want their world to change!

Jesus does not go to the cross because he is nice but because he challenges the "status quo",

- old ideas about who God loves and who he does not love,
- the new ways of life he has in store for us,
- the new possibilities for our world and the church.
-

The servant of God of whom Isaiah wrote knew this and we should not expect life always to be easy for us when we listen to God and share the Gospel of grace with others.