

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn: 216 (verses 3-5) He left his Father's throne above (n.b. last line)

Reading: James 1.12-16

Prayers:

James is struggling with that experience we've all had of being tempted to choose our own desire over and against what we believe God wants for us. He asks, "From whence does "false desire" come?"

Is God to blame?

Well, James gives the traditional Jewish answer.

No. God is good, says James, and he tempts no one.

I'm sure that is true in the sense that he isn't trying to do us down or make us behave in ways that harm us or others. God desires our good and not our harm!

Yet, we can't forget that in Mark's Gospel we read of how, after his baptism, the Spirit "drove" Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan. God may not have done the testing himself but he knew that Jesus had to face challenges if he was to work out what kind of life he was going to live.

"Testing" may not be pleasant but it is an important part of growing into a mature human being. Whilst I'm not convinced that children need so many tests at school there comes a point when they have need to show that they have made the effort to acquire understanding. Equally, for a Christian there is ongoing testing in a world which proclaims that what matters more than anything else is:

- making large sums of money
- being in fashion and living the right "lifestyle"
- being contemptuous of faith, especially the Christian faith.

I guess we've all felt at times the pull just to go along with what the world is saying and doing, to stop struggling with the discipline of the Christian life and to live according to our own desires.

Indeed, James says that ones own "desires" are at the very heart of the problem. He speaks of how false "desire" gives rise to the desired object becoming so enticing that will do anything to possess it.

I don't think that James is saying that we should not be able to enjoy the good things of life.

I remember how two years ago, walking through old York I came across a black Aston Martin. In that moment it seemed to me to be the most beautiful car I'd ever seen. I admired it from the back and from the front.

I looked inside at its finely designed interior. What a car!

I don't regret that such cars exist but after a bit of a struggle I was fortunate to recognise that it wasn't part of God's purpose for me to have one!

The same is true of our delight in other people. Despite our own commitments in marriage, we can delight in other people, in their appearance and personality and character without allowing ourselves to be drawn into the trap desiring to possess them sexually.

The danger is in wanting poses that which God tells us is not for our good. That brings us back to one of the oldest stories, of God telling Adam and Eve that they should not eat

***“of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
for on the day that you eat of it you shall die.”***

In that story, there is a link between failure to live the life God wants for them and death. Death has many forms. At this very moment, I do not doubt that our greed is resulting in the economic fear and death of the present day.

Yet, ultimately, “death” is only terrifying if it leads to our separation from God. Our communion contains the promise that nothing in life or death can separate those who love God from the joy of living in fellowship with him. At the same time, those who love God will seek to live the life that remains steadfast in the face of life’s tests and temptations.

Of that person, James says, they shall receive

***“the crown of life that the Lord has promised
to those who love him.”***

Thanks be to God. Amen.