

TUESDAY COMMUNION

Hymn: 724 Blest are the pure in heart

Reading: James 5.7-11

Prayers:

As we've read through the Letter of James we've noticed that it's often a very activist letter. He's constantly urging people not just to have faith but to make sure that their faith is shown in action.

Whether it is through the words we speak or through our concern for others he constantly encourages the action which reveals a Christian attitude to life.....

Yet, as his letter comes to an end he writes, "Be patient".

Maybe these are especially words for the poorer members of the church who have sometimes been badly treated by the rich members.

His argument for "being patient" is that "the coming of the Lord" is near.

Like many of the first Christians, James seems to share in the expectation that very soon Christ will return to put right the wrongs of the world.

For those who suffered oppression and poverty there will soon be God given justice!

A generation further on and one of the big questions for the Early Church was how they should live when it was clear that the return of Jesus was probably not just round the corner. Would James still have urged those poor Christians to be patient?

In our world, is it sufficient to tell the poor to be patient or do we side with them in seeking to create a more just world where they can be treated with justice?

Certainly, organisation like Christian Aid and Fairtrade exist to make a difference to the lives of the poor and not just to let their impoverished situation last from generation to generation.....

Yet, there is a time to be patient and to be patient not in a resigned way but with a strength of character and purpose.

James tells us about the way in which Christians should be patient.

First, he says, Christ the judge is standing at the door. What is happening in our world does not go unseen and what is happening in the church is known by God. He is not indifferent to the world's needs and ultimately what is wrong will be put right.....

Secondly, he tells those Christians not to grumble against each other. A grumbling church is a divided church where there it is far more difficult to witness to the love of Christ. Grumbling sets one group against another and the church becomes heavy with accusations and inward looking in its life!

Thirdly, he encourages the spirit of endurance which was seen in the prophets. Jeremiah, for instance, prophesied that a nation which did not change its ways would find itself taken captive. When it happened, he continues to care for the people and went with those who made their way into Egypt in order to avoid being taken prisoner by the Babylonians. He stuck to his task of being with his people in honesty and love.

There are times when what we can do is limited. Sometimes it is because of age and frailty, sometimes because the time for action has not come.....

Perhaps we recognise something of that either in our own lives or in the life of the church. Then it is time to be patient but not with a sense of hopelessness

- but with a sure confidence in the God who is the judge of all
- with an outgoing love which values people rather than a complaining spirit which always criticises.
- and an endurance which doesn't give up and a faithfulness to Christ and to those we are called to serve which just keeps going through thick and thin.

May Christ enable us to know when to be patient and when to move on in a new phase of activity!

Amen.