

## **TUESDAY COMMUNION**

The Word of God comes to John - and us!"

Hymn:

Reading: Luke 3. 1-9

Prayers:

Three times Luke solemnly sets his story within the history of the known world. Tiberius is the Emperor, Pilate the Governor of Judea and Herod the nominal ruler of Galilee.

In Jerusalem Luke tells us there were two high priests, though probably he was wrong, Annas having been succeeded by his son-in-law, Caiaphas. Nevertheless, John tells us in his Gospel that the old man continued to have great influence over his son in law!

Luke seems to be telling us that though the story he is about to tell centres on a man who was born in poverty, whose father was a carpenter and not an educated rabbi, yet it is a story about what God has done not just for the sake of the Jewish people but for the whole world.....

The story of Jesus is universal in its implications for though it is rooted in one place, in the uniqueness of old Israel it is going to have a universal outcome.

In our reading Jesus isn't mentioned. Indeed, Luke seems to distance Jesus from John the Baptist. The significance of John is that he is in the line of the great prophets of Israel. Luke declares that at this point in history

***“the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah in the wilderness.”***

If we think back to the stories of how other prophets began to live as prophets we'll remember that all of them were given “the word of God”. Moses also encountered God in the wilderness when he went over to see the burning bush.

As soon as God has revealed himself, “I am who I am”, God sends him back to his own people, the people from whom he has run away, with the message that their cries have been heard and God will set them free to travel to a land of their own.

Isaiah is in the Temple when he saw the Lord, “High and lifted up” and heard the voice of God saying,

***“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?”  
And I said, “Here am I; send me!”  
And he said, “Go and say to this people.....”***

And so God gives his the words he must speak. Time and again, the Bible tells us stories of people to whom God gives his word, a message for his people. Sometimes it is a word of encouragement as it was for the Israelite slaves, though often they refused to believe the truth of it.

Sometimes it was a word of judgement or warning, a challenge to people to change their ways.

John brought both messages to the people. Luke quotes that passage from Isaiah in which the man in the desert cries out for the people to prepare the way of the Lord. At the same time, he also comes with a word of warning: old Israel mustn't assume that it is indispensable, that God create a new people out of the old."

They must, in John's words,

***"Bear the fruits worthy of repentance....."***

Here is a challenge to us, too.

A people who take God seriously are a people who also reveal in their lives something of the character of God. In their lives should be seen the fruit, the outcome, of this turning round, this repentance.

It is never just a matter of words but of a new disposition, a new willingness to treat what God wants seriously!

In our world, our global village, when Obama was President of the USA, and Cameron Prime Minister in Great Britain, and Rowan, Archbishop of Canterbury, the word of God comes to us both to prepare us for the possibilities that lie before us and to challenge us to live the fruitful lives God wants of us.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.