

Feeling at home with God

If I were to meet you on the 5th March, I may well say to you 'Gool Peran Lowen'. You may be slightly taken aback, or think I'm talking about my youngest grandson whose name is Lowen. I would actually be saying 'happy St Piran's Day' in Cornish. St Piran is the Patron Saint of Cornwall and the Cornish celebrate his day just as Yorkshire have celebrations on the 1st August for Yorkshire Day. Whether we're from Yorkshire or from Cornwall we celebrate our special days with our own language, food, music, flags, emblems and so on. We take pride in where we come from and the traditions which we have been taught from a young age. They make us feel a sense of belonging, they make us feel at home.



Why am I telling you this? Well within our Scripture reading, Paul is speaking to Rome, he is addressing both Jews and Gentiles. They were living alongside each other but were not necessarily attuned to each other's different customs and traditions. Some of the Jewish members of the congregations had been exiled by an edict of Emperor Claudius in 49 and had only recently returned when Paul addressed them. These Jews had probably lost their properties and no longer had a sense of stability or belonging (Acts 18:2). This instability led to pressures within society and a degree of conflict within the Churches. The people needed to be able to see past their differences and focus on what united them. Both Jew and Gentile were called to be with God and to live in harmony with each other. Paul addresses this in today's Scripture reading.

Let us read Romans 10:5–15 (NRSV)

5 Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." 6 But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say?

"The word is near you,

on your lips and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. 11 The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. 13 For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

14 But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? 15 And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

The book of Romans can be quite complicated to understand sometimes. It is centred around relationship with God. It tells us how human brokenness has led to humankind becoming out of kilter with God. Within the book of Romans, Paul lays out the bigger picture for people. He wants them to understand how God's promises within the Old Testament, Christ's story, and act of salvation and all that was to follow combine allowing humankind to realign with God and with each other.

The book of Romans emphasises God's love. It also calls us to recognise God's mercy and to show mercy to others. If we read Deuteronomy 30: 11-13 we can see that it tells us how the Law isn't distant from Israel. It wasn't in heaven or beyond the sea but was with the people in their hearts and mouths. This message is mirrored in Romans when we're told that Christ is with us on our lips and in our hearts. That is good news. God who gave the law is close by and all people both Jew and Gentile can encounter God and have relationship with him. Salvation from God, says Paul, comes by confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised him from the dead.

The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is available to all. Good news spreads we can't help but pass it on! The good news of salvation through Christ is so much more than just "*making it to heaven*", but rather transforms our lives on earth as well. When we confess Christ as Lord, Heaven and earth come together and we are invited to participate with God in working within the world to bring about peace and justice, and to reflect the love of God to all those who we meet.

Let us pray:

Romans 10 is a beautiful reminder that God has made a way for us to be united with him. Verse 9 tells us that "if we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved." Rejoice today that God has allowed us to call on his great name and be saved.

Verse 12 reminds us, "For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him." God now makes no distinction for who is included in his eternal family. What amazing grace! Take a few moments to give God thanks for this grace and inclusive love.

We are reminded through reading this scripture that sometimes we are a divided people. Spend time confessing those times where there have been barriers between yourself and others and yourself and God.

Romans 10, verse 15, says, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Pray today for those who are preaching the good news, whether that be in your community or further afield. Pray also that you will be given the words to say to enable you to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those who you meet.

Merciful God, as we think about bringing your good news to others we pray for the world and for all those who need comfort and a sense of peace. We pray for all those who are unwell. For those who are anxious or distressed and for those who are bereaved. Bring before God those who are on your heart to pray for.

We pray for governments and authorities who are developing strategies to contain and deal with Covid 19 and those in the health services who may be risking their own lives to care for sick patients. We pray for the world and the situations that we have heard about, read about, or seen on the news.

Loving God accept these the prayers of your people, for the sake of your Son , our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen