

Trinity Sunday 2020

¹¹ Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.

¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss. ¹³ All God's people here send their greetings.

(2 Corinthians 13: 11-13)

I've been watching some of the news footage from the States this week with a mixture of horror and disbelief. We're in the middle of a global health crisis yet all that is being overshadowed by the actions of a police force which appears to determine the value of human life by colour of skin. As someone who grew up in the sixties and remembers the assassination of Martin Luther King Junior it seems hard to believe that the world hasn't moved on. What made it worse for me was the staged photo opportunity in which the President appeared to condone coercion and control through military action by posing with the Bible. Just that, he held it, and as far as anyone could see he had no intention of opening it.

There's been plenty of comment following that photo, from both secular and religious leaders as well as on the Late, Late Show with James Corden – if you haven't watched the clip of James Corden's dad on how to hold the Bible do look it up¹. As you might expect there's a bit of comedy to it but the conclusion is that the best way is to hold it open because an open Bible means an open heart. So to what do we open our hearts when we open our Bibles?

Essentially, I suppose, through reading the Bible we hope to become people of God, believing in God and living in God's presence. It's what Paul was encouraging the church in Corinth to do, to become people of God, and for Paul it seems very basic. Agree with one another and 'live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you.' That's not quite as easy as it sounds though. Different approaches to worship, different political persuasions, different attitudes to colour of skin and our relationship with the God of love and peace goes by the board.

But, as we understand from our Bible, God perseveres and offers us gifts through which we can share in God's nature. Those are the gifts with which Paul commends to the congregation at Corinth in the final words of that passage from Corinthians. They're familiar to us as The Grace which we say at the end of most services. Through his Son, God offers us grace, his unconditional favour to enable us to be the people he intends us to be. God offers us love and has done from the beginning of creation. Then, through the Holy Spirit God offers one communion or, as we more often say, one fellowship in which all of humanity can be brought together.

It's only when we open our hearts to receive those gifts that we can truly live in the presence of the God of love and peace. We might say 'that's all very well but even if I open my heart to God, it doesn't do anything for others.' Well, I believe it does. If we're filled with grace, love and fellowship we can bring others to know God too, through our actions, through our words and through our prayers. The President of the United States might seem far removed from us but we can pray for him as well as praying for all who are injured or damaged by inequality and racism. Then, as we pray for others to open their hearts to the God of love, we, like Paul, can hope for a world in which people agree with one another and live in peace. Amen

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZv8GQX8E1I>