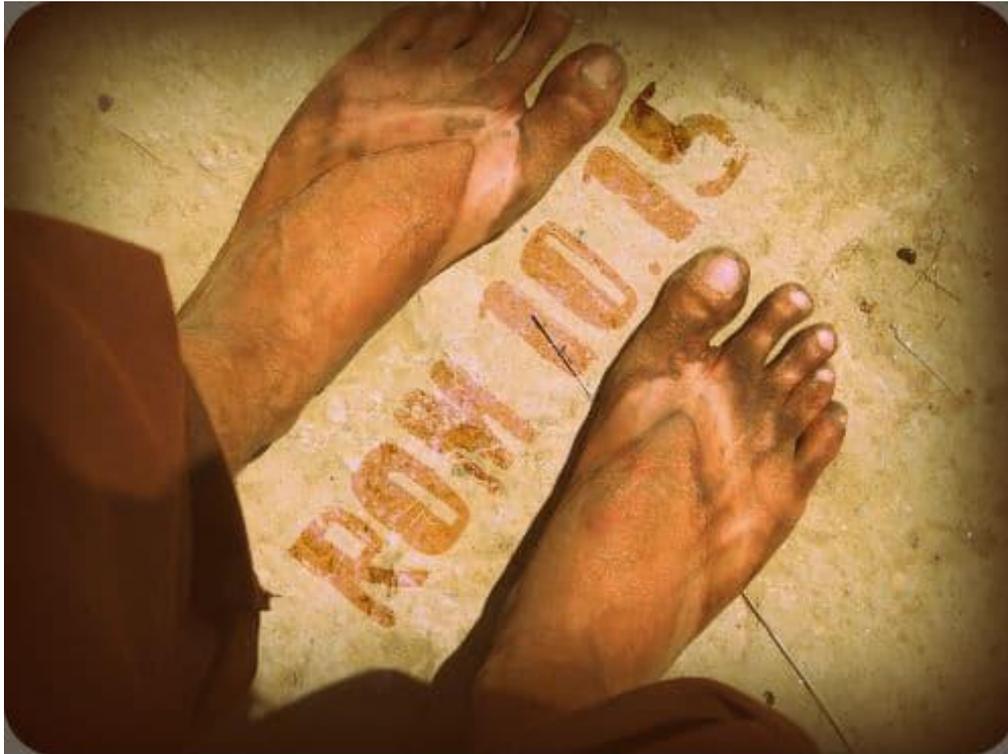


Reading and homily for Twelfth Sunday after Trinity 2020



Andrew Carr, Reader, St Edmund & St Alban Dartford

Reading: Romans 10:5-15

click on the following link for the reading:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+10%3A5-15&version=NIVUK>

Homily

Today is the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity. This chapter 10, as a whole, draws upon Old Testament history and prophets that would have been more familiar to those to whom this letter was sent, than might be the case now. Nonetheless these specific verses have a timelessness that speak to us, you, me, twenty centuries after they were dictated...

You may not think the feet pictured in the image above are beautiful – be grateful they're not mine! – but this passage says that those who take the Gospel to others that their feet are beautiful or lovely. It's interesting to note, as an aside, an instruction of Jesus to His disciples when He sent them out to towns and villages to preach and to heal:

'If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, leave that home or town and shake the dust off your feet...' (Matthew 10:14)

Why did Jesus tell His disciples this? Well, when leaving Gentile villages and towns, pious Jews often shook the dust from their feet to show their separation from Gentile lifestyles and practices. Here if the disciples did this, it would show their separation (as Jews who had accepted Jesus) from Jews who had rejected Jesus. The gesture was to show people that they were making a wrong choice and that the opportunity to choose Christ might not occur again...

In order to be 'saved' according to the Old Testament Law, a person would have to live a perfect life, not sinning once. So why did God give the Law to Moses when He knew no one could keep it? Well,

according to Paul, one reason was to show people just how guilty of sin and disobedience they were (per Galatians 3:19). The Law was a foreshadowing of Christ – that is, the sacrificial system educated the Jews so that when the true sacrifice/the promised Messiah came, they would be able to understand His work (per Hebrews 10:1-4) – tragically they did not... The system of ceremonial laws was to last until the coming of Christ (though in fact it lasted until the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem some 40-ish years after His ascension). The Law, including animal sacrifice, pointed to Christ's sacrifice on the cross (this is pre-echoed in the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-14 - link below):

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+22%3A1-14&version=NRSVA>

Jesus provided our salvation through His incarnation (coming to earth) and His resurrection (coming back from the dead). God's salvation is available to all of us, will come to us wherever we are, whoever we are. All we, you, me, need to do is to respond, to repent and to accept His gift of salvation. (In passing, the *deep* as used in verse 7 refers to the grave or Hades, the place of the dead.)

As one theologian put it referring to Deuteronomy 30 in light of Romans 10:

'The desire of Paul's heart is that his fellow Jews would be saved... the answer to his desire is threefold: (1) God has unveiled his salvation a single way for all people; (2) God has brought it near to them, as indeed to everybody, in a new way, for which different types of obedience to the Law becomes irrelevant; (3) all who openly acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead are thereby wearing the badge which declares, in the present, that there are those whom God will save, vindicate and declare to be his people in the future.'

The content above paragraph is known as the doctrine of justification by faith.

Verse 11 must be read in the context of the passage. Paul is not saying Christians will never be put to shame or suffer disappointments – we do and we will. There will be times of when we are let down or were circumstances turn against us. What Paul is saying is that God will always be there for us, you, me come what may. I wonder out loud how often we, you, me forget that promise..?

Verse 12 is an important statement. "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile..." which, in the world of the First Century AD, was revolutionary thinking, especially amongst the young church composed of converted Jews and of Gentile believers where tensions over belief and practice were, alas, never too far from the surface and not helped by false teachers spreading all manner of stuff and nonsense to further personal agendas...

In the world of the Twenty First Century AD, verse 12 remains pertinent and contemporary. Both St Eds and St Albans are Inclusive Churches +. In other words, we welcome people of all colours, cultures, genders, we welcome all people because all of us are broken and only Jesus can fix us, you, me...

Verse 12 remains pertinent and contemporary because churches are not inclusive. I have been in places of worship and seen and heard people being ignored, avoided, insulted behind their back because, in the opinion of the churches concerned, their faces didn't fit, their lifestyles (perceived) were deemed 'inappropriate', or their gender should have barred them from licensed ministry... All these incidents occurred within the last ten years... As Gandhi once commented:

"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ."

Moving on...

In closing, per Jesus' commission at the end of Matthew's Gospel, we are to take the message of salvation to the world because how else will people hear the message unless someone shares it..? But unless our actions match our words and vice versa, don't blame them if the message is rejected.

We are to love God, we are to love our neighbour and to share that love with all. Providing a genuine space of unconditional love, peace and safety draws people – that is the challenge to the church today – and then offer them Christ. So pray about who God may be prompting you to share with: a family member, a neighbour, a friend, a work colleague... and if so prompted talk to them. 😊

Until we meet again, keep safe, keep well, keep praying.

AMEN

+ <http://inclusive-church.org/> – accepting everyone just as they are – not as we want them to be...