

West Hereford Benefice Sermon
9th August, Ninth Sunday after Trinity

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Romans 10:13

“How beautiful are the feet of those that bring good news.”

Romans 10:15

“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”

Matthew 14:27^b

Above are three verses from the epistle and gospel set for today. Perhaps rather than reading what is written below one would wish to take one (or more) of these verses and meditate upon it. Relaxed in a quiet space, slowly keep repeating the words of the selected text – internalise them – let the words reach the core of one’s being – with one’s thoughts and mind centred on the words = and be open to where that leads.

For those who prefer a more orthodox sermon some thoughts on the three verses quoted above.

Romans 10:13 – *“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Is set in the context of Paul emphasising that salvation is for all. God is not arbitrary, everyone, Jew and Gentile who calls on the Lord will be saved.

It is necessary to balance this with Matthew 7:21 *“Not everyone who says ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”* What is key here is how we come before the Lord – in what frame of mind do we approach our Lord? When we believe and call on the name of the Lord Jesus, proclaiming Him as our Lord and Saviour, we are justified in Christ and born again with the divine life of God. For those who like pursuing Biblical connections there are parallels in Peter’s Pentecost speech (Acts 2:21) and the prophet Joel (2:32) from where the verse originates.

The reassurance Jesus gives to the disciples in the boat when they see him walking on the water (Matthew 14:27^b) *“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”* is one of affirmation for all of us. Words to be held onto especially in the bad times – when life is hard going. *“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.”*

These words chime well with those Jesus pronounced in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20) *“I am with you always”*. Five more gracious words to encourage one through life’s difficult patches.

For me, and this is a very personal observation, I also locate them in the Parable of the Prodigal Son or the Parable of the Two Brothers (Luke 15:11-32). The elder brother who sulks when the Father welcomes back the younger wayward son with open arms.

For those like me a ‘cradle’ Christian brought up in a worshipping Christian family and for whom Sunday Church attendance was the norm; one can lose the enthusiasm, the spontaneity, the awe of worship. The spiritual life becomes dry, stale, mundane. The joyousness is replaced by duty. Then those words of the Father (Luke 15:31) *“Son you are always with me and all that is mine is yours”* become so meaningfully apt.

As a cradle Christian one has had the lifelong joy of being with the Lord – of being part of a Christian home. Of knowing these words *“Son/Daughter – you are always with me and all this is mine is yours.”* How blessed and joyful are we who have grown up with the good news.

This brings us back to Romans 10:15 and the third verse *“How beautiful are the feet of those that bring good news.”* Even more wonderful is the verse from Isaiah (52:7) from whence that scripture originates.

*“How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of the messenger who announces peace,
who brings good news,
who announces salvation,
who says to Zion,
‘Your God reigns.’”*

Amen.

Malcolm Robertson