

Hebrews Ch 13 v1-8, 15-16 Luke 14: 1,7-14

Instructions for living

This morning concludes the readings from The Letter to the Hebrews which we have been hearing read during the month of August. So I thought we would begin with a short recap of what we have been listening to over the last few weeks. Although the King James Authorised Version of the bible entitles the book “The Epistle of St Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews” it is now widely accepted that it is highly doubtful that St Paul was the author.

However, the person who did write it made extensive use of Old Testament quotations and images, which would indicate that it was written to Christians, who knew the scriptures rather well, probably a community of Jewish believers.

Throughout the letter the writer inter-weaves warning, with doctrine, the word of God and the work of Christ. He encourages his readers to hold fast to their faith in Jesus and directs them to see that Christ is superior to all that has gone before, prophets, priests and angles, even Moses and the Old Covenant.

In Jesus is the supreme revelation of God and the all-sufficient mediator between God and man.

The epistle contains moral advice and practical teaching that covers social, private and religious life as it should be for who live under the New Covenant.

Interspersed within the text are a series of solemn warnings against the dangers of drifting away, missing God's promise, and refusing to hear God's final word.

The last chapter of the letter, part of which we read this morning, contains advice in a series of exhortations and teachings, involving Social, Private, and Religious Life.

The first part of the chapter begins by directing the Christian community to “Keep on loving each other as brothers”. Or as the New Revised Standard Version translates it “Let mutual love continue” but the use of the more politically correct translation hinders us in making the connection that we are God’s Children by adoption and grace brothers and sisters in the faith. How ever it does remind us that this is not a one way street, as a Christian community we are expected to care for each other and also bring

that loving care and concern to those we come into contact with in the world around us not just in our tight knit community.

Christian love must be expressed in continuing practical concern.

It demonstrates its reality in compassionate deeds.

It has a practical responsibility, in the wider society to strangers, prisoners, those who are ill treated.¹

Love also has a central place in the Christian's private life - to family and friends.

And is an integral part of our religious life as we care and pray for those who lead and teach and support us in our spiritual development, and those we too encourage and pray for.

The passage continues with the call to respect authority, orderliness, and discipline within the church community and to have a responsible attitude

¹ The Message of Hebrews Raymond Brown ©Inter-varsity Press 1982

towards those who have been given the task of being leaders. We are reminded that leaders are called to constantly watch over those committed to their care. They are to keep watch like shepherds and like shepherds they hold a responsibility of care. They need our prayers just as much as we need theirs.

So here we have a whole set of instructions for living the Christian life both as individuals and as a Christian community.

The foundation on which this is built, is love. God's love for us, which if we allow it, works through us to those we come into contact with in our earthly lives.

It's about working in loving co-operation with God and our fellow pilgrims. Perceiving need and supplying it.

**Guiding and guarding,
Nurturing and feeding.**

At the heart of this we each have a responsibility to pray and to support one another.

As the church's leaders have a responsibility to the community they serve, so the church members also have a responsibility, to their leaders as well as their fellow Christians.

No one can work effectively for Christ unaided and unsupported.

There is no place for arrogance or conceit in this way of life this is about selfless giving and humble service, and above all an acknowledgment that if we truly desire to be like Christ and follow his example we can't do it alone we need God's help and guidance each step of the way and the loving prayers and practical support of our fellow Christians.

So as we come to worship together this morning may we offer to God our thankful praise for all He has done for us in Christ Jesus, may we go from

this place to witness to His love in the world around us, in all we say, and in the compassionate service we undertake in His name. And last but by no means least may we show that love in generosity of spirit.

**Let us pray
Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labour and not to ask for any reward,
save that of knowing that we do your will**

