

***Children's Talk—Family Eucharist—God's family***

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor  
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost — 2 July 2017  
Reverend Martin Johnson

*Genesis 22.1-14; Psalm 13; Romans 6.12-23; Matthew 10.40-42*

Good morning to you, young folk! I have a question that has been sent to me ...

*Hi, Mum and Dad are starting to talk about getting me baptised and I was wondering why is this done when we are babies and not bigger children? If we were baptised when we are older wouldn't we understand it better?*

Well, let me ask you a question: when you were born did you 'understand' things? No, you didn't, did you; but when you were born you became a member of a family. You didn't 'understand' that did you, no; but as you grew you began to understand what it was to live as a member of a family, how to share, how to look after each other, how to speak to each other, how to live together and we keep learning these things right through our lives as we grow and our families grow. So, when you are baptised you become a member of a family, God's family. You don't understand it, no. But as you grow you slowly learn, you learn what it is to be a member of this very large family in much the same way. This family is much more than just Mum, Dad, brothers and sisters, it's even bigger than grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles.

This family begun with a couple called Abraham and Sarah. Now Abraham was the first person in the Bible to believe in God and so he is often referred to as the Father of faith. Abraham becomes the father of a large family, his son was Isaac, we heard about him in the reading this morning, Isaac's son was called Jacob and he had twelve sons and his twelve sons each had a family or a tribe. Jacob changes his name to Israel and so the Hebrew people as they were called became known as the Israelites that simply means the people of God. So, the Old Testament is all about these people, this great family—how they believed in God, or tried to, and how they lived together, how they sometimes they got things right and sometimes got things wrong. They believed they lived as God's people in the land God had promised to them. The descendants of these people are living today in that land, and it's still called Israel. They are the Jewish people.

Now a second question came my way:

*What type of bush the sheep got stuck in in the story of Jesus and the Lost Sheep?*

This is an interesting question. In the New Testament, when the lost sheep wandered away from the flock, Jesus the Good Shepherd went and found it and brought it back to be safe with the family. But the Bible doesn't say that the sheep got caught in a bush! The sheep in the bush was in the story we heard this morning about Abraham and Isaac his son. Now Abraham believed in God and he believed that God wanted him to give him his little boy Isaac, this is hard for us to understand today. But God didn't want Isaac at all, he just wanted to know how much Abraham loved him, did he love him so much that he would even give him Isaac. So, Abraham took a sheep instead it was caught in a bush and he gave it to God and no doubt they had a great feast. What sort of bush was it? I expect it was a really hard, dry, prickly bush like you get in the desert!

This talk of sheep reminds us that Jesus is known as the Good Shepherd and you will hear that during our service and there he is, over there (pointing to icon). Now although Jesus was

Jewish, he came to say some very different things about being one of the chosen people, one of Abraham's family. He came to tell us a different way of being family. He said, "I am the Good Shepherd" and I have come to look after the family but this family is going to get much larger.

So first he gathered around him twelve followers. Straightaway we can see Jesus was trying to follow the same numbers of the family of Abraham. Then he taught these twelve all about God, he taught them the Lord's Prayer, he said you are all children of God you are all one family. More and more gathered and he told these twelve to go out and tell everyone about God, go to Israel first he said and tell them about this new way of understanding God as Father. Then go out beyond Israel and say that God is Father of all, we are all one family. That is us! So, we Christians are one family, a very big family, we look after each other. But we are different from Abraham because we understand God differently, because of Jesus.

If we want to show that we love God and believe in God we do so by following Jesus. And if we follow Jesus we look after each other. He said this morning that even small things are really important ... like a cup of cold water. Imagine that in the desert, when you are really thirsty. So today we will be decorating mugs (here's mine) to remind us that we are to help everyone in this great big family of ours even just a cup of cold water! We remember that Jesus said, "whoever welcomes you welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes God."

So, Abraham began a family that followed God. That family got larger and larger and then God then sent Jesus to say that this family is going to get a whole lot bigger—and it's still growing today as more and more folk are baptised.

And, yes, we all try to care for each other.

And finally, the last question ...

*I was wondering how big is the Ark.... Mum doesn't know these answers!*

137m long × 22.9m wide × 13.7m high ... that's how big the ark is!

Let's go and decorate our mugs!