

**Notes for Sunday 29th August 2004,
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Rob Lamerton**

Readings:

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Psalm 81:1, 10-16

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 4:1-14

After the Sydney Olympics, the US 100m relay team draped themselves in flags and posed with muscles flexed as a sign of their greatness --- eyebrows were raised.

Now they were probably not the only ones who did such things --- and I hasten to add the people I know from the USA are most gentle and humble.

BUT to curb such overt demonstrations, the US Olympic team has employed Ben Beaman the great long jumper and I think Janet Evans to educate members of the US team in appropriate behaviour to prevent this sort of gloating behaviour.

I must say I have seen little of it!

They might have also been employed to teach the Australian women's rowing eight NOT to talk to the news media until AFTER they had resolved the issues between them!

There's no doubt about it, we like our winners **and** losers to be humble --- to recognize the qualities of the opposition --- and to accept that they don't quite have what it takes "on the day".

Humility --- Oxford [dictionary] has it "having a low estimate of one's importance".

It is based on the Latin humus --- ground

we could say humility is about being "earthed", having our feet on the ground.

OR

having feet of clay --- recognizing we are

made up of the same elements as the earth

made by God

Two elements:

earthiness

glory

Possibly we could redefine humble as:

Not: having a **low** estimation of one's self

But instead: having a **realistic** estimate...

and recognizing that because

we are of the earth
and created by God
we are equal to others

Dicken's character Uriah Heap always protested:

"What an 'umble man I am" --- to the point where we cannot believe him.

Instead humility grows in us as the unconscious effect of being (on our knees) before God in penitence --- recognizing our earthiness --- our failings --- but at the same time recognizing from where our life comes.

Jeremiah was trying in his early writings to remind his people about these very things.

To remember where they had come from

To remember their trials and tribulations

To remember the God who had brought them through to a "plentiful land to eat its fruit in good times."

BUT Jeremiah says you have **not** remembered and have taken up with all sorts of gods who are not like the Lord --- how easy it is to let things get in the way of our love for God.

Jeremiah's people had forsaken the Lord, the source of living water

and had dug their own water supply

which was cracked and faulty and therefore could hold no water.

the source of their life was draining away and drying up.

What happened for the people about 30 years later was captivity and exile.

Chris Cheah commented on this verse: "when we lose sight of God we create our own exile"

[Chris commented on this quote; he thought he said we create the conditions for exile.

Linda would add: The Rabbi Baal Shem Tov said:

Forgetfulness leads to exile

Remembrance is the secret of redemption]

Jesus was dealing with the same attitude among the people --- those who should have known better!

The Pharisees believed that their obedience to the Torah would give them a better place in God's great banquet and it means that they also saw themselves as better and more important as they went to dine at the home of another Pharisee.

You can almost imagine the unholy shoving and jostling as people went for the best places (especially as they lie on the floor at the feast!)

But Jesus' story reminds them that it is the host who puts people in the correct places --- and in the great banquet it is the Lord.

So Jesus is saying it is the Lord who invites and gives a place --- it is not earned by merit of the Law --- it is **GRACE**.

In God's great banquet, those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who are humble, --- who recognize their earthiness equally will be exalted.
This is a theme of the scriptures and they have failed to see it!

The whole scene was an exercise in back slapping self importance, but Jesus points to the Lord's great banquet as one where **ALL** are invited not as a reward for importance, **BUT** because of God's grace and generosity.

This is how God's people ought to behave towards one another.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews is also calling the people to remember --- to remember who they are --- to remember what they are called to be:

of the earth

called by God

to praise God
to do Good.

We are of the earth, humbled and yet called to do great things with God.

In his name

Amen.

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The site was first published on July 28th 2003.
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