

Jesus' policy speech

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Jeremiah 1: 4-10; Psalm 71: 1-6; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4: 21-30

There is no doubt the ALP appear to have more energy and are getting better press coverage with Mark Latham leading the parliamentary party. This week he delivered his policy speech to the party faithful and apart from some disagreement over border protection he was well received.

Of course the government were quick to point out gaps and omissions.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus has given something of a policy speech in the synagogue in Nazareth but as yet in our story, there are few, if any, who could be called "party faithful" among the crowd.

Even though the immediate response is favourable, v22: "All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth" They begin to question "Is this Joseph's son?" and rather than saying "Isn't it wonderful how he has grown!"; "Hasn't he turned out well—so clever and wise"... He is aware of the negative attitudes and confronts the opposition.

1. "Doctor, cure yourself"
2. "Do here in your hometown the things we have heard you did in Capernaum."
3. "Truly no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown."

The opposition prompts Jesus to remind his hearers that *faith and the favour of God* is *NOT* limited to the traditional Children of Israel.

even Elijah and Elisha the great prophets found *faith and God's favour* amongst the Gentiles.

Elijah found the widow of Zarephath to have faith and provide for him in the midst of drought which was a sign that God's favour had been held back.

Elisha found Naaman the Syrian to have faith even though his own leader, the king of Israel failed to have faith.

So Jesus quotes these stories to illustrate the lack of faith of the crowd AND to point to the faith of the gentiles.

This tends to be a theme in Luke's writing that Jesus, finding little faith among his own, reaches out beyond his own people.

I am always amazed at how religious people can forget the most important issues of their faith when disagreement arises. How the really important aspects of the Jewish law go out the window at the time of dispute.

There was no polite request to leave the synagogue and go back to college to learn what the scriptures said ---

They were filled with *rage!*

They *drove* him out of the town and led Jesus to the brow of a hill...

So that they might *hurl him off the cliff.*

WOW! These people are serious about their religion!!

But isn't it the case that where religious beliefs are held so dear that often irrational and unloving behaviour erupts betraying all that is good and loving. Surely we can hold firm beliefs *WITHOUT* being fanatical and unloving.

I'm sure that is why St Paul wrote the passage we have read from I Corinthians today! Because there was some considerable dispute amongst the believers in Corinth and some attitudes of superiority among those who used their spiritual gifts. In fact this passage looks like a later addition put in because of its importance ---

As he concludes the list of spiritual gifts he says:

“But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels (ecstatic languages) but do *not* have love etc... I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

If I have the gift of speaking and tongues
the gift of prophetic speech.

OR give everything away

WITHOUT LOVE—I AM NOTHING.

And yet so often it is Love which goes out the window in religious discussion and debate.

Paul goes on to say what the nature of LOVE is.

LOVE = AGAPE

- patient—in the New Testament always means patience with people.
- kind—sweet to all
- not envious—envy indicates a meanness of spirit.
- not boastful—love is not given as a means of promoting one's self.
- not arrogant—not inflated with its own importance.
- not rude—love is gracious

does NOT insist on its own way—when we do want only our own way—we have lost sight of love,

not irritable—does not become exasperated and fly into a temper
not resentful

does not rejoice in wrong—love does not add up a list of faults.

but rejoices in the truth.

it bears insult and injury

believes—is trusting

hopes ---

endures and conquers.

all things.

Now the message was absolutely necessary for the Corinthians because they had developed a two level church where some were more highly regarded than others.—those who exercised (possessed) spiritual gifts—speaking in tongues, prophecy healing... it seems wielded power over others. There were also divisions over whose authority should be followed—Paul, Apollos, Cephas or Christ. There were also it seems divisions over the levels of learning and divisions in the sharing of communion where some got drunk and food was not shared with the hungry.

Now these are NOT issues here. But there may be others which need to be faced.—The intinction cup should not become a cause for division NOR should our provision for the youngsters among us.

We cannot just hold to past traditions because that is the way it has always been—in fact, if we look closely at Christian history they have NOT always been.

Jesus offers the people of Nazareth and the people of St Philip's or everywhere the option to see and experience God in a new way... to see God concerned *not* just for religious people of our tradition but for people everywhere.—He calls us: to discern faith, hope and love in surprising places, and to know that God has been at work long before us!