

Sunday 24th October 2004, Twenty first Sunday after Pentecost Rob Lamerton

Readings:

- Joel 2:23-32
- Psalm 65
- 2 Timothy 4: 6-8, 16-18
- Luke 18:15-30

Sermon notes [not the sermon, just the notes!]

[Last night at the ARIA (Australian Rock Industry) Awards, God came in for a bit of rubbishing — I think Guy Sebastian gave thanks to God, and that prompted others to poke their bit of fun. But I'm sure when Jesus said "let the little children come to me", he also meant those who would grow up to be rock singers!]

The welcoming of the children and the indication "to such as these the Kingdom of God belongs" indicates many things.

Children are

- vulnerable
- trusting
- playful
- dependent.

We hear they were infants in many ways... they symbolize the relationship we have with God.

They came

- without baggage
- without prejudice

- they are open
- and have little to offer
- but themselves.

It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs and Jesus WELCOMES them, even **rebuking those** who stop the children.

BUT then we hear the story of the rich ruler who asks what he must do to inherit eternal life. The fact that he is a **ruler** might be significant — it refers to "Roman or Jewish officials of all kinds."

In comparison to the infants of the other event, here is someone with power and authority and wealth... —he had it made. BUT he wanted to know what to **DO** to inherit eternal life.

When Jesus quizzes him about the commandments, we find that he has kept all these since his youth.

ADD piety to power, authority and wealth!

His credentials were impeccable **BUT** still not good enough.

Jesus tells him to sell all he has and distribute the money to the poor. **THEN** he will have treasure in heaven.

Jesus wants him to let go of his human wordly authority and credentials to be vulnerable and dependent, to truly meet God like the children. He will also be free to do as Jesus says — Come, follow me!

Unlike the children, this man is "very rich" — the things which contribute to the "good life" are actually the things which hold him back!

Jesus points out it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

The disciples, recognizing that we all have our baggage, our prejudices, our possessions, which hinder and handicap us ask:

Then who *can* be saved?

Well, it is impossible for mortals, BUT, it is possible with God.

In spite of our faults and failings,
in spite of our humanity, our pride and selfishness...
God can do it!

The next little episode tells me that Peter still didn't get it.
and **we** don't get it!

"Look, we have left our homes and followed you" he says, "We are not like this man!"

"But you are" Jesus might well say!
because you keep telling me what you've done —
what you've given — you are still looking for credit!

Truly, I tell you, there is no-one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come, eternal life!

Don't look for credit//just do it! And the smallest step for the kingdom will be rewarded in this age, and in the age to come: eternal life...

If we were to read the missing bit from Paul's second letter to Timothy, we would find that although many have gone away, that "Luke alone" is with Paul in his latter days in prison in Rome.

This "Luke" is, we believe, the author of the Gospel in his name and of the Acts of the Apostles.

Here is Paul, near the end of his life (AD67-68), aware that Timothy needs guidance, and so he writes.
Timothy had been a companion with Paul and Luke on the journeys through Turkey, Greece and Macedonia.

Why Luke??

This is the "year of Luke" in the lectionary;
Last Monday was St Luke's day,

Luke is also mentioned in Paul's Letter to the Colossians 4:12, where he is called "the beloved physician". (which could mean, teacher or doctor...) and when we read Luke, we find an emphasis on healing — so was he a doctor?

The connections with Paul and Timothy are also evident in Acts where we find him entering the story in Acts 16:11, also 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1-28:6. He seems to enter the story a little after Timothy and he travelled with Paul, Timothy and Silas.

The link between Acts and Luke is evident in the first verses "To Theophilus" as well as the fact that the use of language and style are similar.

The literary style of Luke is of a high quality; cultured, adapted for a variety of situations. and so we conclude Luke was a physician of a Gentile convert or a friend of Paul.

It is thought he wrote in Antioch (Syria) about 70AD — He was NOT an eyewitness but keen to write a careful account of the events surrounding Jesus. (Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1)

Luke's writing is directed more to Gentiles than Jews (he was himself a gentile), and so he refers to the Old Testament and prophecy a lot less. He includes more stories from Jesus in Jerusalem. The Good Samaritan, Prodigal Son, Unjust Judge and the Pharisee and Tax Collector injecting the rejected and the outsiders into the Jerusalem setting.

In Luke's gospel, Jesus is depicted as the divine// human saviour who expresses compassion and tenderness in a mission which is universal.

(from Jesus' descent from Adam; including Samaritans, women, Gentiles, Holy Spirit...)

*Conclusion: notes from memory of hearer:
approach Jesus, as children, be like children, just BE...*

