

PENTECOST 3 YEAR C

ST JOHN THE DIVINE

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14 Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20 Galatians 5:1, 13-25 Luke 9:51-62

There's something fascinating about human nature!

Imagine observing others in a coffee shop.

What have you seen?

Have you seen friendship; understanding; generosity; gossip; anger; criticism?

There's something intriguing and tantalising about little encounters like these.

Sometimes it would be lovely to be invited to join a happy and friendly little group of coffee drinkers. Other times, an invitation to join might be like a nightmare.

What would people see if they saw YOU?

What impression would you like them to have about *your* nature?

What would be on your list?

Luke 9:51-62 tells us a bit about human nature.

Think about Jesus' attributes in this reading as we're told about him travelling towards Jerusalem and sending his followers ahead into a Samaritan village.

In a few verses we are told so much about Jesus;

He was a person who was very *focussed and determined*.

He had resolutely 'set his face towards Jerusalem' and nothing, not even rejection by the Samaritans, would stop him.

He was both *faithful and open minded*. He continued to be open to Samaritans in his ministry and work even when there were differences between them. The message of the Father's love had no boundaries.

He was *flexible, able to change his plans and move on if necessary, never forgetting his goals*.

He was always a *leader who focussed on community*. He invited others to join him and equipped them for the task.

He was *realistic and honest about the hardships and stumbling blocks he experienced*.

'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' Luke 9:58

I've often admired his *resilience and strength*.

Not everyone is like Jesus:

Think of James and John who wanted to get back at the Samaritans and bring down fire when they opposed and reject them.

Think of the would be disciples who heard Jesus' call but put barriers in the way of responding;

'First, Let me bury my father'

'Let me farewell those at home . . . '

There's something about human nature, isn't there?

We can be so wilful, self-centred and self-interested, always seeing ourselves as 'Number One.'

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

I don't think St Paul ever sat around in a coffee shop watching and overhearing his fellow patrons but I do think that he was a good observer of human nature.

Writing to the Galatians, Paul spoke very clearly to the internal conflict we can all experience when it comes to following Jesus and responding to God's loving presence and grace.

Following Jesus is a big call. Like James and John in today's gospel reading, we are all on a steep learning curve as we try to live like Jesus. And sometimes, we get it wrong.

As Paul so clearly pointed out in his examples, our human nature and the life of the Spirit are opposed to each other.

We know that from our own experience.

There are days when the words we could honestly choose to describe ourselves are a long way from the attributes Paul says are the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in us.

Which words describe us?

Do we choose:

Love not hate

Joy not despair

Peace not conflict

Patience not demand

Kindness not hardness of heart

Generosity not meanness

Faithfulness not unfaithfulness

self control rather than a lack of restraint in our dealings with others?

'Live by the Spirit!' Gal 5:16 Paul wrote.

What would others say of us if they observed our life? What would they see?

The love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness and self control with which we live our life and which we bring to all our relationships are the real proof of our discipleship and faith.

If we all chose to live the life of the Spirit:

Our family life would be enriched

As we all came together, our church would be an open, joyful, generous and welcoming community.

We would all be happier

The whole world would be more peaceful.

All we need is courage

Courage to really follow Jesus – no excuses

Courage to take an honest look at ourselves – and make some changes

Courage to really open ourselves to the Holy Spirit

Then, God willing, there will be many words to describe us – positive, beautiful life giving words that speak to God's loving presence in our life and our absolute determination to follow Jesus.

The prayer we pray at the end of our worship each week is a wonderful summary of our intention to follow Jesus and live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice.

Send us out in the power of your Spirit

To live and work to your praise and glory.