

Sunday Thought

3rd July 2022 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

2 Kings 5: 1 – 14

Psalm 30

Galatians 6: (1 – 6) 7 - 16

Luke 10: 1 – 11, 16 - 20

It's ALL about HIM!

It appears we are to have a 'summer of strikes'

beginning with train drivers, barristers and airlines and postal staff. I have never been on a picket line and find it difficult to understand the intentions and procedure of strikes, but I do know the importance of listening carefully to every side of a dispute – and there may be many 'sides'. There was a time when Jesus was close to having a 'disciples strike'! (*John 6.67*). The situation has been repeated in the church on many occasions since and today's readings pose a question which I believe should be put by Jesus people about strikes, as well as on most other social issues. *'Is my action really all about me, or them, or Him?'*



In the verses from Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia, he speaks about living together in community. As with all churches, these which were in modern day Turkey, had their differences of opinion and clashes of personality. So the apostle says, *'If you believe you see someone doing or saying what is wrong, speak to that person about it – but do it gently and be sure you are not speaking hypocritically. Look at yourself first and act humbly, like servants to each other; aim to do what's best for everyone; live by the laws of love; don't get bogged down by personal bias, especially about church and religion.'* He knows what matters most is for them all to live like the new people Christ Jesus has made them. *'Let the gracious, unselfish way of the Cross be at the heart of all your decisions and actions'*. There's no doubt Christian life really is revolutionary! That makes the likelihood of a 'disciple strike' both understandable and possible.

The gospel reading tells of one of Jesus' mission training events. It certainly sounds like a military exercise more than a lesson on how to say *'Come along on Sunday morning if you are free!'* The seventy-two chosen volunteers were Jesus' vanguard. Even that number was too few. He urged them to pray for more recruits because *'there are so many people out there who need to hear about the Kingdom of God.'* First considerations for Christian service, he explained, are not *'what shall I wear? Do I need a bigger bag for all I want to take; will I be able to understand the people I meet; can I choose my accomodation? Will I matter if I fail?'* 'No!' says Jesus. *'You are not in a competition for the 'best catch'. It is only about YOU in so far as it's first about the Father and his Kingdom!'*

The story of Naaman raises contemporary issues too. War to begin with. Yet another war between Israel and Syria was over. Israel had lost this particular battle. The victorious Syrian commander in chief had been applauded as a great deliverer. His success, though, did not give him immunity from diseases like leprosy. Then there was the matter of immigration, racism and slavery. One of the Israeli captives was given to Naaman's wife as a personal servant, but hateful humiliation did not prevent her developing a care for this family who owned her. She told them of the prophet Elijah and his healing powers back at home. International diplomacy made Israel's king Joram shake in his boots, but arrangements were made to visit the prophet across the border. The story tells how Naaman had to surrender esteem and dignity as the price of healing and accept an even more humiliating remedy from a very unsociable prophet who could not hide his abhorrence of his nation's enemy.

In all, Naaman had to discover – *'It's not all about me. It's about the power of the God of Israel!'* Similarly, Elijah knew this was not about him and his spiritual gifts, but about his God, his king and his people. The young servant girl, separated from her home and family could say *'It's not just about me. It's about caring for my master, his family and household, whose slave I am.'* The final overall message of the story is everyone acknowledging 'the God of Israel.' It was all about HIM!

I wish we could see again how the key to resolving social issues and discords is living by Jesus' laws of love. He reminds us that we must pray for more and more recruits to sign up and live by this maxim, *'It's about HIM before it's about ME!'* Then, even a 'strike' can produce 'sparks' of his love for HIM, for ME, FOR US ALL!

A prayer of thanks after hard times [based on Psalm 30]

Lord, my faith in you was so strong.
I felt confident and secure, believing you, the almighty God, were with me.
I had heard of all your great works among the nations throughout history.
I had seen the great changes you have made in the lives of people like me.
I had my own experiences of your saving, healing love. You were my strong help.

Then it all changed. I no longer felt you close.
I couldn't share in the praises of your people as I used to.
I felt out of touch with you, afraid and alone in the dark.

But then I stopped thinking about myself.
I turned my thoughts in your direction. I called out to you.
Like a song at dawn, you wiped away the tears of my dark night

How could I have thought your goodness would fail me. It lasts a lifetime.
Let my praise be equally long and I will not be slow to honour you.

