

## Sermon – Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017

### Justice and Mercy

Readings:

2 Corinthians 11: 1-11

Matthew 6: 7-15

I love the phrase from Psalm 85:10 ‘Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other’.

When mercy and truth come together the result is righteousness and peace/shalom/harmony.

Another word for righteousness is ‘justice’, in the sense of being morally right.

After the awful fire in Grenfell Tower there has been much moral outrage – an appropriate response – which seeks justice on behalf of those who lost their lives or their homes and belongings.

God is a God of justice and Christ – who suffered unjustly, who alone has been given the task of Judge of all nations and people.

It is Christ who has been given the role of Judge – which, he has been delegated to human courts in the meantime whilst we await the final Judgement.

The desire for justice is strong in the human psyche – but it is frequently rooted in either fear or a desire for vengeance rather than justice. – How quickly people wanted heads to roll.

Appropriate moral outrage has quickly changed to crowd and media judgement, before proper investigation.

I find this understandable but also very frightening. It shows a level of self-righteousness and a belief that we know better than those responsible for the careful process of discerning justice.

It moves the responsibility of judgement from the Righteous Judge to a mob of unrighteous judges.

But this should not be the response of Christ’s followers who were taught, so clearly, ‘Judge not – or you will be judged’.

In Christ we find a very different response to human sin, or negligence i.e. Mercy!  
‘He came not into the world to condemn the world ..... - and how the world deserves condemnation! - but that it might be saved through him; through Christ’s death on the cross.

You see justice was met with mercy not judgment- with merciful kindness.

If anyone was/is in a morally right position to judge justly it was, and still is, Christ.

Justice demands punishment - an eye for an eye – a life for a life. But God is not like that –

Jesus has made that known. ‘Let he who has no sin cast the first stone.’

How can we be so blind to our own sin that we foolishly demand others to be punished without mercy?

Thank God we have a justice system that doesn't demand an eye for an eye – a life for a life. In our system – respected worldwide – justice is met with a level of mercy.

Of course people must be made to face up to the truth of their actions or negligence; there can be neither justice nor mercy without truth coming to light.

But if we are to remain or return to being a Christian country then truth must be met with mercy.

I was moved, yesterday, at one of the fire survivors saying to the raging protestors – 'Don't do violence in our name – that is not to respect us.' It creates division and flies in the face of so many different sorts of people coming together in acts of mercy and loving kindness.

What a contrast! – mob rule, creating more hurt and division – vs – community harmony and loving acts of mercy!

Thank God, Jesus doesn't demand heads to roll when people commit sin; rather, he calls for repentance – changed behaviour – 'Go and sin no more'.

As for us, and all nations – Jesus' teaching is clear – as in the bottom line of our Gospel reading today:

'If you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sin.'

And that is a terrifying possibility.

Let's pray for God's mercy on those who would judge.