

Start with Reading of Galatians 5

Over this particular Lent, we are centring our thoughts around what Paul describes in this letter to the Galatians as the fruits of the Spirit.

Outworkings that we should expect to see in ourselves of our faith in Christ.

Expressed in Article 12 of our Articles of Religion, which we find printed at the back of our Prayer Books. Set as they are at a particular point in our history as a Church and as a society there is none the less a timeless truth in this one:

Albeit that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit. *Article 12 (BCP 2004 p 781)*

As with last week, set all this in the context of the teaching of the Revised Catechism of the Church of Ireland on the work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit enables me to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ.

So when last week we looked at love, we first thought about how we find it in Jesus and God

As we experience the healing reconciling love so we begin to show it.

A love that took the initiative
that knows no boundaries - even our enemies
that does not calculate the cost – My God, My God

We become not just a people who pray but a people who do.

Tonight think of joy – follows on from love.

Just begin with ordinary human relationships as exemplified in the picture of the return of the Prodigal.

There had been a breakdown in relationships – we all know the outcome of that – there can be tension, hurt, pain – in ordinary human situations there can be an element of revenge.

Change in atmosphere when that argument, that division is resolved.

In the picture – the son had set off home – the father had been waiting ready to welcome him on his return.

There is both joy and pain – harmony and disharmony.

Like ‘love’, ‘joy’ is another that occurs right through the Bible.

An emotion of harmony – harmony with God, harmony with our neighbour

Psalms - Jubilate ‘O be joyful in the Lord’ – joy in the presence of God
Psalm 119:11 Your decrees are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.

In Old Testament, experience of judgement involves a banishing of joy

Jeremiah 7:34 ³⁴ And I will bring to an end the sound of mirth and gladness,
the voice of the bride and bridegroom in the cities of Judah and in the streets
of Jerusalem; for the land shall become a waste.

By the same token, the experience of redemption, the restoration of harmony,
gives rise to joy – passages in Isaiah

¹¹ So the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. *Isaiah 51:11*

Joy – communion, fellowship, peace with God – deeper than simple emotions
or feelings – transitory – rise and fall.

Biblical joy runs deeper: Jesus on the eve of his Passion, speaks of a deep
inner joy

'A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'? ²⁰ Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. ²¹ When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. ²² So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. *John 16:20-22*

Not something we manufacture from within – it is gift – in the picture the son's joy is a gift of the father.

Joy is gift of God, God working in and through us

Arising out of love experienced in Christ – work of HS enabling to grow in likeness to Christ..

May each of us be enabled to receive the love that is showered upon us; may the Holy Spirit that he promised continue to work in us, enabling us to become more like Jesus Christ. Becoming more like him, may our lives demonstrate something of the love, the joy that is in him – so that by the albeit imperfect witness of our lives, others may be drawn into his kingdom.