

This morning, as we celebrate Holy Communion we are using the service that many will have been brought up with – not quite as Cranmer produced it but close enough. There is a value in using a particular text all the time, be it traditional or contemporary language; but there is also a value in using something different; we go a little more slowly, we maybe concentrate a little more on what we are saying and perhaps in the process enter a little more deeply into the mystery of worship, of communion with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In our post-communion prayer this morning I will use those lovely words, ‘and here we present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy and lively sacrifice unto thee ...’ Over these last few weeks, in our Old Testament Lesson we have been following the story of the Exodus – a story that ends with the death of Moses within sight of the promised land. This was the journey of a people with their God; a journey of faithfulness and failure but all in the presence of God. Our journey through life is a journey with our God. To travel with God is to travel with a purpose. As Abram was called that he and his descendants might be a blessing, so Jesus called his disciples, and through them us, that they might be ‘the salt of the earth,’ ‘the light of the world’. So we are called to travel with a purpose, to be signs of the Kingdom in the world in which we live. What we are talking about here is our own particular witness.

It is at this point that that post communion prayer speaks to me. Over the last few weeks the reading for the Epistle has been taken from Paul’s letters to the

Thessalonians, a letter in which Paul speaks of his own particular ministry among the Thessalonians; at one point in this letter he expresses his deep personal commitment to them, ‘So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.’

To share the Gospel is to proclaim Good News, to proclaim Christ, to show something of Christ. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, calls upon his readers, as they make their own particular witness, ‘to have the same mind in yourselves that was in Christ Jesus, who, being found in human form, emptied himself, taking the form of servant’. At the heart of Jesus’ own ministry there was kenosis, self emptying, self giving. At the heart of our own witness, at the heart of our worship, there must be something of that same self emptying, self offering. And so in our worship ‘we present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee’

Witness, living out our faith before God in the world in which we live, involves giving something of ourselves. Our faith is communicated not just by what we say but by who we are, the care and concern we show to our neighbour both near and far. Witness must be an expression of love, a love shown in response to God’s love for us, expressing a genuine care for our neighbour.

And so indeed, using words of the General Thanksgiving, in response to God’s goodness to us in ‘our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life; but above all in thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our

Lord Jesus Christ; the means of grace and the hope of glory. We beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days.’