**Sunday 15 October 2023 - Lectionary Readings: Philippians 4:1-9 & Matthew 22:1-14**

Theme; English verb: ‘It is easy to unite people against something, but impossible to unite them for something.’

Paul wrote: whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Over the last few years I noticed in the Western world and USA a hardening of its societies. Their left and liberal dream of one happy living together world is turning into a nightmare of controversy, infighting and intolerance.

Looking to Israel and how they were caught out by Hamas terrorists it appears they were too much busy with their own divisions, to watch out for the danger over their borders.

Rumours have it that even some generals were discussing a coup to install Barak instead of Netanyahu. We’ve seen the demonstrations on the news over the last few months of tens of thousands in Israel for or against new laws.

Israeli were divided to the bone and when you look to Israel’s history as in the Bible, it were the divisions that made them loose their country.

David build up the kingdom, Salomo established it and his son spoilt it. 2 kingdoms came, but vanished all together. The Assyriers conquered 10 tribes in the 8th BC and the Babylonians the last 2 in the 6th BC. Judah the Hammer from the Maccabee’s established the kingdom again in the 2nd BC, but again they lost it 100 years later to the Romans. Reason? Divisions, infighting and political gains.

If the Jews are not careful they will loose their country again because of divisions and infighting and political instability.

Taking the consequences of Jewish intolerance, divisions and infighting into account; how are we now doing in the CofE?

We have different fractions and they all fight for the own corner. Church Society reported on the Synod meeting last summer in their Autumn Crossway Magazine that it was a meeting full of mistrust, manipulation and as it is written; ‘even seemingly uncontroversial items descended into partisan sniping’. Other things that happened were dramatic resignations, accusations of lies by the Archbishop, calling Alpha and Christianity Explored as sectarian, promises broken, palpable frustration over slow progress in certain matters and last but not least; the notion that the CofE is no longer ‘episcopally led and synodically governed’, but seems to be ruled only by the house of bishops.

Conclusively, the report stated that ‘the underlying disunity and disagreement is simply to great to be overlooked’.

What counts for the Jewish nation even so counts for the CofE. It’s not for nothing that Jesus said how a house divided in itself cannot stand (Matthew 12:25).

‘Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.’

These words of Paul might have been read many times, but living accordance to them is a complete different matter.

We all have our hobby horses and we love to ride them, but how fundamental are they to our role in living the Christian life and trying to build each other up in the faith, instead of tearing it down?

The gospel reading was about the feast in the kingdom and there was the one person not properly dressed, wearing no wedding garment, who was thrown out from the banqueting table.

Is there a reference here to Revelation 19 (8+9)? ‘The marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Whether the Church of England stands or falls is not something we can decide, but we can only contribute to its survival by at least trying to bring the words of Paul into practice.

Only in the Name and for the Glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen.