

Trinity News

Pentecost 18 Two Sons of Joseph of Nazareth?

The letter of James read from today (James 4:7-17) may well be from the hand of the elder brother of Jesus. When we say "elder brother" we are at once in the field of speculation as we are in saying that Jesus did not have siblings. There is an old legend that says James the brother of Jesus was the son of Joseph from a former marriage. This may come from a desire early on to exclude any children for Mary after the birth of Jesus. That desire is not present in Mark as we see from the clear reference to siblings in this gospel.

James writes more like a wisdom writer in Israel than someone proclaiming the salvation of God through Jesus Christ. **Proclaiming Christ for James is to live an upright life, to curb the tongue, and to search for wisdom in the nagging concerns of every day.** There is a strong note of concern for the poor as we see in the prophets and in Jesus. James does not like double minded (two-souled) people and the affectations of some of the rich about their superior place in his society. There is no mention of the Reign of God, the central matter of Jesus' preaching and teaching, though James' faith in Jesus is clear enough. But so much of the heart of Jesus for people is there in James and it is a link between the two of them. Jesus wanted people to believe in him as the one sent from God. James wants people to have faith in God in Christ linked to the practice of the Christian life. My own view is that there seems to be a relational connection between Jesus and the writer of the Epistle of James. This is because the letter demonstrates an inner knowledge in some way of the conduct of Jesus and the prescriptions that he gave to his disciples about their conduct.

When we compare Mark 9:38-49 and James 4:7-17 we see the connections. The deliberately overstated sins of hand, foot and eye (Mark 9:43-48) are very much about our 'walk' every day, and that is a deep concern of James also and indeed his central concern.

The connections between New Testament figures and our inability to prove it is very tantalising because these relationships affect in part our understanding of the people concerned.

The questions raised about the relationship between the writer of James and Jesus are similar to the questions that are raised about relationships within our families and with our friends. What are the harmonies and the disharmonies in our own relational situations? **The closer we get to Jesus the closer we get to other people. The further we draw away from other people the more we seemed to draw away from the presence of Jesus and our awareness of his guidance.** Yet Jesus persists in remaining in the background asking the questions, "What are your reasons for doing this?" and "Have you looked at an alternative way of doing this that might be more fruitful?" No one is above making mistakes in relationships. Jesus one day barked at Peter, or to the provocative *Shatan* lurking nearby, "Get behind me Satan..." That must have struck Peter like a hammer blow and left him reeling inside. Jesus was dealing with darkness of Spirit and Peter got caught in the middle of it. The things that fracture our own relationships often stem from influences that are outside our field of influence.

Joseph nurtured Jesus though he knew that his conception was outside his province. But he was a real father to Jesus. His relationship with James is the stuff of scholarly papers in the Church. But anyone who had Joseph in their life would know a father's love and James shows signs of a loving foundation. I have no brothers, but I think that James would be a good one for anyone, including Jesus. Cherish your siblings and cherish your families in good times and in not-so-good times.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- Bible study, 10:00am.
- Group Discussion, 7:30pm, Parish Office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel.

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Genesis 2:18-24

Psalm 8

Hebrews 2:9-18

Mark 10:2-9
