

Sunday 11A 14.6.26

This gospel passage is followed by a short series of instructions as to how the newly sent out apostles are to behave on their travels : on their re- presentation of the travels of the twelve tribes of Israel:

*“Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts: no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or a walking stick (a staff). The labourer deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you enter look for a worthy person in it and stay there until you leave. If the house is worthy let your peace come upon it; if not let your peace return to you ...”*

They are going to be looked after by God but God will look after them through the agency of other people-they deserve to be looked after because of their labour just as the people who look after them deserve to do so because of their love, that is their openness to the stranger and in this meeting of two sets of worthy people -two sets of people giving and receiving without charge - the gospel can take root.

I'm reminded once again of Adam Nicolson's three rock pools on the shore opposite the Isle of Mull in NW Scotland and how the placing of the pool and its nature were so important. Too far up and the shore and too enclosed and very little life can survive in it, further down the shore it does better but it's nature is still too enclosed and it's inhabitants – the two- spotted Gobies- are readily eaten by gulls, too easily preyed upon by others. But lower still down the shore and with a natural floor and rocks on one side, rather than concrete, the pool flourishes -it doesn't move anywhere but receives life on each incoming tide – it proves wonderfully diverse and unpredictable mirroring the natural flow of life.

The itinerant labourers of the gospel are to establish themselves in particular places where they can give and receive without charge, take the risk of being enriched by others as they in turn enrich them: an ecological take on the gospel where stability and flux co- exist - a commentary too on monastic life where the reception of strangers becomes a mutually enriching gift and a commentary perhaps also on our relationship also with God as co-creators, at least in providing the right substrate on which the Lord can settle and enrich us. The propagation of the gospel then takes place from these centres of peace, a peace we can leave behind and take with us when we go. If, as Wittgenstein says, a word only has meaning in the stream of life so one might say “Christianity only has meaning in the stream of life’ and just as well, ‘the stream of life only has meaning in terms of Christ and Christianity ‘– of the Christ who becomes just like us in all things but sin, in all things evolutionary including death and resurrection.

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