

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST C 07

In his letter to Timothy Paul speaks about power.

Heady stuff, power.

This past week we have seen again the power of the press mixed with the power of prejudice.

The debate about African, but particularly Sudanese refugees has been distressing to many of us, not least of all our Sudanese brothers and sisters.

Whether or not it was begun as an “election ploy” is irrelevant. At best the Minister was ham fisted in his opening comments that fired the onslaught in the press and quickly spread through the media as a whole.

Aussies are, by and large, hospitable people who have through successive generations welcomed refugees from many lands, we have assisted their settlement and we have welcomed the cultural diversity and riches they have brought to our land.

We need to push the “race genie” back into its bottle and work for that harmony that should characterize all of our community.

After all as St Paul put it: Galatians 3:28 (NRSV)

28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

The Christian Gospel allows no place for racism, or distinctions between people because we are all God’s children:

Genesis 1:27 (NRSV)

27 So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

We have also seen the abuse of power in Burma; how terribly sad to see the legitimate aspirations of people so brutally put down.

St Paul speaks of God's power, a power exercised through love and service. Paul, a prisoner – literally bound in chains of iron,

2 Timothy 1:7-10 (NRSV)

7 for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

8 Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, ¹⁰ but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Paul is reminding Timothy, as he reminds us all, that he has a God given ministry and must not be timid in exercising it. God has given us all the spirit of power, of love and of self control. This power cannot be abused because it is the power of God being exercised for the common good.

St Paul reminds us that in all things, but especially in our suffering we need to rely on the power of God. The power of God will not exempt us from suffering. As Israel learnt through the experience of exile, it is a power made perfect in weakness.

When we are at the end of our resources, then God's power can work through us, bringing to the world about us the same grace that took hold of us and saved us.

This power is seen in the Gospel with the mustard seed. We do not need great faith, but rather we need faith in the greatness of God. And in the story of the worthless slave – there is nothing we can do to establish a claim on God – God freely loves us and accepts us - as we are.

So, let us - 2 Timothy 1:14 (NRSV)

14 Guard the good treasure entrusted to [us] you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

[1]

And let us exercise the power of love – for the common good of all, but especially for the weak and vulnerable.

[1] *The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. 1996, c1989. Thomas Nelson: Nashville