

# Emptying Ourselves

This week's message builds upon the last two that Viv preached on the Easter theme.

If you missed it then download the message from our website or request a CD.

If you missed the series on Jacob (last autumn) then request the notes from Hayley.

Our Text today is:

Philippians 2:1-18

## Re-cap on Easter Story – Old & New Testament meet

At this Easter time we have been looking at the events of the Easter story and how this fits into the big picture of God's dealings with the world. In the Old Testament we read of God calling a people to himself first through Abraham, then Isaac and Jacob. Through the prophets a messiah is promised. At the time of Jesus, mostly as a result of the oppressive rule of Rome, the people of Israel were expecting a messiah, hence the excitement of palm Sunday.

However, Jesus made it plain through telling the parable of the tenants in the vineyard that God was rejecting his people for a people "who will produce ... fruit" (Matthew 21:43). Jesus' resurrection is described as the "first fruits" of the Kingdom of God coming to earth. The subsequent sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost provides the power that the new people of God need for this work.

## Theology or Results?

Some of us know well what I have outlined above, others may not. Whilst it may seem like irrelevant theology, it is important to ask the question:

"If God rejected his first people then why will he not reject us?"

The key is in the parable of tenants in the vineyard. It says that God's "new" people will produce fruit. Why can we do it, when Israel did not?

The answer lies in Good Friday.

## Emptying Ourselves

We will not turn to the normal texts that we read on Good Friday but to Paul's reflections on Good Friday. This is theology, but not in a dry academic way, it is simply thinking about God.

As usual with Paul, the text is quite long but we can summarise it as follows:

If you are a Christian  
(v1)

- One in Spirit & purpose
- No ambition or vain conceit
- Look after others as well as yourself (v2-4)

Because Jesus  
"emptied himself"  
(v7)

- Work out your salvation
- No complaining or arguing
- As we hold out the "word of life" (v14-16)

When you get home, why not read the whole book of Philippians, it is not that long.

Pouring out our lives for God affects us in our personal, home and church life.

Is God challenging you to be different in any of these areas?

Verses 6-11 are thought by many to be an early Christian hymn. Some of the earliest Christian communities in the world may have sung this song to God and to themselves in order to declare the amazing truth of the Easter story which is the infinite God of the universe *choosing* not to take that which he was entitled to but instead gave it all up.

He became an *obedient* (v8) *servant* (v7) going as far as dying on a cross. This is a complete *sacrifice of self* for the God whom he loves and for the world that he made and cares so much about. This is beautifully put in v7, translated in my bible as "made himself nothing". The Greek for this word is *kenosis*. Literally "*Emptying one's self*".

Each of us here or listening to this message is alive! God has given us life! It is a fixed amount of life now, before Jesus recreates everything. We get choices as to how we use it. Do we choose to pour out our life for Jesus?

As Paul writes these words he knows that he is coming to the end of his life. Even though he is in prison we get a sense of great joy (v17) that he has as he realises that his life has been poured out for Jesus. We can this understand that we will only be a fruitful people (and therefore not rejected by God), if we pour out our lives in His service.

### What does Pouring out your Life for Jesus mean?

Paul gives us an overview of these things, but we have to work them out for ourselves. This is a distinguishing feature of Christianity unlike, for example, Islam. There are two dangers:

- Doing nothing and therefore just following the "crooked and depraved generation" (v15)
- Developing a set of rules and regulations. This is religion and the Pharisees were condemned by Jesus for this.

Lets, therefore consider together what pouring out our lives for Jesus means.

No selfish ambition (v3)	
No vain conceit (v3)	
Look after other's interests and yours (v4)	
No complaining or arguing (v14)	
Hold out word of life (v16)	

### The Reward

Being honoured by God as people who "Shine like stars" (v16).