

John 17:1(2-5)6-8 - Palm Sunday - 1.4.2007

The time has come to be glorified!

¹ When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he looked up to heaven and said, “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son so he can give glory back to you. ² For you have given him authority over everyone in all the earth. He gives eternal life to each one you have given him. ³ And this is the way to have eternal life – to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth. ⁴ I brought glory to you here on earth by doing everything you told me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.

⁶ “I have told these men about you. They were in the world, but then you gave them to me. Actually, they were always yours, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything I have is a gift from you, ⁸ for I have passed on to them the words you gave me; and they accepted them and know that I came from you, and they believe you sent me. [NIV]

We often hear of people, who have been in hospital - or whose relatives were hospitalized, how bad the nursing care was. People complain about nursing sisters, about teachers, about the police - but have we not got people in these places that we deserve?

When it comes to choosing a job the advice one gets is so often: don't go into teaching. Don't become a nursing sister. Does anybody still think of joining the police? Why is it that these jobs have fallen into such a state? For many it is the case of the low pay - anybody with just a little ambition surely will not choose a job where the pay is so low.

How can you be self-fulfilled if you earn so little - added to that are the hours one must work, that one is expected to serve others, that one must be ready as a teacher to give of your time to help the children.

Commitment, service, duty - these terms are not particularly popular in our time. Yet, it is precisely these things which were important to Jesus when He spoke of the fact that it was time:

The time has come to be glorified!

Being glorified - that sounds really good. That has the feel of self-fulfilment to it. That has the sound of a person with a good self-image. Only, this is not a case of

seeking self-fulfilment, but of fulfilling the will of His heavenly Father!

Not Self-fulfilment, but obedience

Self-fulfilment - as the term implies - is concerned with the own self. With getting ahead in life; of wanting to know what advantage there is in doing anything. It is probably true to say that this striving for self-fulfilment and the emphasis on our self-worth are a reflection of a time in which the rights of the individual are often considered as the highest goal.

The time has come to be glorified - Jesus is not concerned with His rights. Rather His concern is to put things to rights between God and us. That is why He was able to withstand the temptations in the desert, because He was not concerned with proving His power, but with being obedient to His Father and the commission He had been given. Instead of striving for self-fulfilment, Jesus' task was to serve - and in this serving to literally sacrifice Himself.

When He entered Jerusalem the crowds shouted their approval - their palm branches were the 'banner' of the freedom fighters / terrorists, who to a large extent came from Galilee. Did the people think that their shouts of 'Hosanna' and their acclamation as king would move Jesus to taking up the battle to be crowned king. That had been tried once before, after He had fed the more than 5.000.

The path the Messiah was to follow was different, however. The throne that awaited Him was not the one to be found in the palace of Herod. The time had come to show what God's intention was, when He sent His Son into this world.

Not Self-fulfilment, but knowing God! - that was what Jesus was to lead people to do. It was not to be about Him - about the acclamation of the crowds -, but He was to lead people to knowing God. Not the God we so often imagine. Not a God, as we wish Him to be.

Instead we are to know God as being quite different to anything people had ever dared think or describe. God, whose concern is not human rights, but that every single person should have their dignity restored: the dignity which comes with living in God's presence.

Knowing God - the God, in whose image we were made. Only when we know Him, will be able to find fulfilment, because then we will also know who we are. All attempts to find fulfilment apart from God are doomed to failure - after all, what are

we trying to be without Him?

The attempt to find self-fulfilment apart from God, will remain a constant search to find the actual meaning of life. On the other hand this being occupied with ourselves degenerates to the point where one no longer brings up children according to any discipline - they must look into themselves to find fulfilment there.

Knowing God - because we will then recognise who we are, and what the purpose of our lives is. When Jesus died on the cross the curtain in the temple tore in half - the way into God's presence had been opened. That is where we discover who we are: that we were created to live in fellowship with this God; that we only truly have life, when this fellowship has been restored to us.

Knowing God: realising that He has made us for fellowship - with Himself and with one another. Where we are concerned with self-fulfilment, community breaks down, because we are always concerned with ourselves before all else. Fellowship/ community means living from God and toward Him; it means that we look to what God says, that it is what He wants for my life that is important.

Knowing God - that does not mean always understanding God's ways for us. It also does not mean that I know beforehand what my life will be like. But we may see God in all things - the God who is so concerned for me / for you that He sacrificed His own Son for us. We may trust Him with our lives, because we know that He stands by our side - as my Father, and not as a distant God.

Knowing God - the God who entered this world to serve, and not to be served. Surely that says something about us, who belong to Him. The will of God for us is not that we should fulfill the ideal which is so important in the eyes of the world. In Jesus Christ our lives have taken on the dimension of eternity - and it is this dimension that is to determine how we live here. We are not to be concerned with our short term goals and dreams. It is not about being successful - in the way that our world judges success.

What we are to do is to follow Him on the path He leads us on. This path is always concerned also with our 'neighbour' - with the people around us. We are to see in these people the God, who created them, who has redeemed them.

The prayer of our Lord is not for self-fulfilment, but that we fulfill the purpose for which we have been called by Him. When this happens, things will be quite different in our hospitals and schools. The way in which we deal with one another will be

characterised by a new sense of peace. That is God's gift to us in Jesus, who gives us so much more than we deserve. Now, instead of striving for our own glory, we will glorify God as we live as His people.