

## Trinity 5

Genesis 18;1-10a      Colossians 1:15-20      Luke 10:38-42

Welcome and Hospitality are important to us in this church. We welcome those who have been part of this church for years and those who are newer and finding their place in the family, as well as any here for the first time today. Hospitality is part of the welcome with coffee and biscuits after the service and sometimes cake, as today when we celebrate with Allen, serving as our deacon, celebrate his forty years of licensed lay ministry. Welcome and Hospitality feature in both our OT and gospel readings. In the reading from Genesis, we meet Abraham sitting by the door of his tent in the heat of the day something we know about this year. Abraham sitting by the oaks of Mamre, which provide welcome shade, sees three visitors approaching. Despite the heat Abraham rushes to offer hospitality; food and drink and water to wash the feet of the three or is it one, because we know what Abraham does not yet realise that this is the Lord, God has come to speak with him. Abraham calls to his wife Sarah to hurry and bake bread and to his servant to hurry to prepare the choicest calf to offer these unexpected visitors. But it is only when his guests are eating that Abraham stops rushing about offering his welcome and hospitality, stops pays attention properly, and listens. Abraham listens, no doubt with amazement, as God, through the words of these three- in -one strangers, tells him that his wife Sarah will give birth to a son though both are very elderly. Abraham listened and trusted God though Sarah laughed in disbelief when she heard this news. God's promise **was** fulfilled and Abraham became the father of a great nation, and is still revered today. Martha, as we heard in our gospel reading also rushes to welcome and be hospitable. She welcomes Jesus to her home in Bethany near Jerusalem which she shares with

her sister Mary. We do not know whether Jesus visited with his disciples or whether this was a planned visit as Martha hurriedly tidies the house, prepares, and cooks a meal, sets the table, finds extra seats, and plumps up the cushions, as we might well do for such an important guest. But Mary did not join her sister in all her busyness. Instead, Mary sat at Jesus' feet listening to all he was saying. Sitting at the feet of a teacher was the place of a disciple, the place for a man, but Mary took this role, she sat and listened to all that Jesus said, leaving her sister to do all the work, seen as a women's proper role and place. It is easy to picture Martha's exasperation as she goes to Jesus and complains 'Lord, do you not care that Mary has left me to do all the work'.

Jesus' response to Martha seems hard as he commends Mary for choosing the better way by quietly listening to him, paying him her full attention, and so hearing the word of God though he welcomed Martha's hospitality. But today's readings are about more than welcome and hospitality, this is part two of Luke's account which began last week. Those of you who were here, heard the parable of the good Samaritan, a familiar story. Jesus told this parable of love and care by a Samaritan outsider for a man robbed and beaten near to death, when his fellow Jews had ignored his needs in response to a clever lawyer, well versed in Jewish law who asked Jesus 'who is my neighbour'. He had first asked Jesus what he should do to inherit eternal life and when Jesus responded by asking this clever lawyer, 'what does the law say?', knowing well that he would answer 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and your neighbour as yourself. If last week was about loving our neighbour, then today our focus is on loving God with all of ourselves body, mind, heart, and soul. If loving our neighbour is difficult as the meaning of

neighbour is extended to include all who are made in the image of God which means everyone and all creation, then loving God can seem all but impossible. How **do** we love God We love by spending time, time listening and hearing Jesus' reassuring words in all the gospels; 'peace be with you', I will never leave you nor forsake you, do not let your hearts be troubled I go to prepare a place for you'. But we must also pay attention to Jesus' more challenging words; 'love your enemies', the first will be last in God's kingdom, deny yourself take up your cross and follow me. Jesus tells us that the poor, meek and persecuted are those who are blessed rather than the rich and powerful. Jesus came to reveal God who is love to a world in disarray then as our chaotic world is now. Our NT reading from the letter to the Colossians was not about either welcome or hospitality but about who Jesus the Christ is; the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation, and what he has come to do; 'through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things ...making peace through the blood of his cross. Loving God means growing in our knowledge of Jesus through listening and reading scripture with reflective study and worship Loving God involves time spent like Mary who became a true disciple and Abraham becoming a father in old age, listening paying attention and NOT being distracted. Of course we are also called to action, Jesus rebuked his own family saying my mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God **and do it**. Before this service there is a hive of activity to prepare and it is good so many are involved. It is not just ministers like Allen and me, but choir and organist, servers and sides people, coffee makers and flower arrangers, cleaners and those who ensure we do not run out of anything, who make a welcome to our worship. But all of us, especially me are reminded not to be distracted by this activity but choose the better part like Mary and listen,

resisting distracting thoughts, of lunch, meetings, things to do but to hear God's word. We can only love because God first loves us and welcomes us and in response, we welcome others, as Paul writes in his letter to Romans, 'welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, **for the glory of God**'. Jesus ate meals with many different people including tax collectors and sinners while a hymn we sang a couple of weeks ago reminds us; the kingdom of God is not only one of justice and joy but a place where 'The outcast are welcome God's banquet to share' This eucharist in which we all share in thanksgiving for our salvation through Christ's death and resurrection, is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet where we can love God with all our heart soul mind and strength a place of welcome and hospitality to all and for all. Amen