

Thursday 8 October 2020

Today is Thursday the 8 October, in the twenty-seventh week of Ordinary Time.

The Choir of the King's Consort, directed by Robert King, sing Henry Purcell's Hear My Prayer, O Lord: "Hear My Prayer, O Lord, and let my crying come unto thee." As I listen, I too bring my prayer, my needs and my longings, the deepest feelings of my heart, before the Lord.

Today's reading is from St Paul's letter to the Galatians.

Galatians 3:1-5 [Jerusalem Bible]

Are you people in Galatia mad? Has someone put a spell on you, in spite of the plain explanation you have had of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Let me ask you one question: was it because you practised the Law that you received the Spirit, or because you believed what was preached to you? Are you foolish enough to end in outward observances what you began in the Spirit? Have all the favours you received been wasted? And if this were so, they would most certainly have been wasted. Does God give you the Spirit so freely and work miracles among you because you practice Law, or because you believed what was preached to you?

"Are you people in Galatia mad?" Paul's not exactly at his most diplomatic here, but do you get a sense from these lines of how frustrated Paul is with the Galatians? – and what it is that makes him so angry?

Paul is worried that these people are missing the whole point. Others are telling them that faith, and freedom in Christ are not enough, that they must also keep the Jewish Law to be saved. People usually take refuge in the Law when they get frightened of living by faith. You know where you are with the Law, but living by faith can be a bit of a risk. Do you notice that fear in yourself, at all, that fear the Galatians felt, the fear of living by faith?

As I listen to the reading again, I might ask myself if these words might be spoken to me: is my faith a matter of following the rules? Is the God I relate to a regulator – a hard task-master – or a loving and forgiving God?

I ask the Lord for what I need. Perhaps this is greater faith, perhaps the courage to live by faith, to take the risks the Lord asks of me. Whatever I need, I bring it before God now.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.