

Feast of James the Apostle

Acts 11:27-12:2 p1044

Matt 20:20-28 p934

Today is the feast day of St James, or 'Santiago' as they say in Spain, from **Diego** or **Tiago**, James in Spanish.

However we may ask which James? In the Bible there are 3, sometimes known as James the Great, James the Less and James the Just.

Today we are going to make it the feast of all of them!

First **James the Great**. James the son of Zebedee, brother of John. The readings show it's really **his** day. Peter, James and John formed a kind of inner cabinet among the 12. Our Gospel reading gives us that truly bizarre, embarrassing scene, where Mrs Zebedee presents her 2 sons before Jesus and asks that, in the kingdom, one sits on one side, one on the other. Jesus points out that real leadership is not about being **bossy** but being a **servant** first and foremost, rather as he was. Interesting that in the last few years '**servant leadership**' has become a major theme in academic leadership studies.

We note too, from the Acts reading, that James was himself **martyred** in the service of our Lord.

A very early and extremely dubious tradition places the bones of James in a place called **Santiago de Compostela** (burial ground of St James) in N. Spain, to this day a popular **pilgrimage** site. Apparently his bones were swept up by an angel and deposited there.

This James then was an important figure, close to our Lord.

James the Less was also a disciple. Son of Alphaeus. We know very little indeed of him.

The James we know most about was **James the brother of our Lord**. He was not a follower when Jesus was alive so must have become one after the resurrection. This James, known as James the Just for some reason, became the leader of the very first Christian community in Jerusalem, Bishop if you like, and contributed the highly important Letter of James that we have in our Bible.

I would like to give 3 glimpses into his letter in the hope that you might be inspired to read it yourself. **Recently we studied the letter in our home BS groups**. It's full of highly quotable 'one liners' that really do promote thought and reflection about genuine Christian living

Here they are:

- Faith by itself, not accompanied by action, is dead. 2v17
- Be quick to listen, but slow to speak 1 v19
- Come near to God and he will come near to you 4 v 8

Faith by itself, not accompanied by action, is dead. 2v17 1148

The reminder that to have faith, belief, trust is great, but if that is not accompanied by a generous response from us – doing, helping, giving, then there is something non genuine, counterfeit about it. Nothing worse than a ‘holy Joe’ who is self centred, unpleasant and unhelpful. Genuine faith will always be accompanied by loving actions in support of others.

Faith by itself, not accompanied by action, is dead. 2v17

Be quick to listen, but slow to speak 1 v19 1147

Atlee, who I mentioned 2 weeks ago would have approved! We do not need over loquaciousness (‘monologue not the same as a decision’ as Clem said) we need to be listeners. Listeners to others (how can we respond helpfully to the needs of others unless we listen), listeners to God. Prayer should not be just a shopping list, but also a quiet reflective listening to God. Deep listening to others involves more than just ears! It does not include talking over them. **Be quick to listen, but slow to speak 1 v19**

Come near to God and he will come near to you 4 v 8 1149

At the heart of the Christian way is that close relationship with God. Coming prayerfully to him knowing that he will respond in love and support and come to us. That’s what makes it all so wonderfully worthwhile. The practice of prayer, reading His word, reflecting on it. **Coming to God, God coming to us.** Getting into the habit of, if possible, a daily time of quiet with God. **‘Getting deeper into God’** as our Bishop Alan has said – one of his priorities for the diocese. The traditions we hold so dear in the CE can support but do not replace **coming near** to God. That is our source of joy, of strength, of wholeness.

Come near to God and he will come near to you 4 v 8

So then James:

James, brother of John, apostle and martyr whose day today it really is.

James son of Alphaeus, a disciple but about whom we know little.

James brother of Jesus, leader, teacher and I hope through his writing something of a **mentor** to us today.