

It's the way I tell 'em...

So said Frank Carson (Northern Irish comedian of 70's and 80's) at the end of a series of Jokes.

Tell 'em... runs through our readings today, but this is no joke, but it is joyful, as it is to tell of God and God's covenant relationship with us.

Psalm 67 has a familiar ring to it, which we might know from the words of a blessing that is sometimes used at the end of a service.

'The Lord Bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace: and the blessing...

Those words originally come from the book of Numbers in the Old Testament, where the Lord speaks to Moses saying, *'Speak to Aeron and his sons, saying this is how you will bless the people of Israel.'* (Numbers 6.22-26) Our Psalm today echoes this blessing and expands on it. The blessing that God gives is nothing less than God's saving power, God decides and God judges. Living within Gods governance the psalmist tells us, should by our actions in this relationship lead to the increase of the earth, it is an abundant blessing of abundance for the earth, and it brings an abundance of joy, and such joy cannot be silent. It is in our expression of joy and praise that we enter that relationship with God. And as a people of God at worship, we have a calling and a prophetic task to tell it among the nations. To 'tell 'em' and not to keep silent.

In Acts we hear of the end of one mission and the beginning of another. After prayer and fasting Saul and Barnabas are 'set apart', called, and commissioned with the laying on of hands, to go and tell the good news. They are sent out by the Holy Spirit and on arrival they proclaim, they tell of Jesus the Messiah, risen and ascended. They speak to those who they believed understood their relationship with God, (people of the Synagogue) but now they would hear of the 'light of Gods countenance' in a new way.

Jesus too tells, or rather cries aloud. This passage is the final part of his public ministry and completes the chapter in John that started with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, followed by Greeks who come to ask questions. We hear that Jesus is troubled and that God speaks and glorifies Jesus in the hearing of the people. Confusion, misunderstanding and the power of the pharisees can be felt and just before we come to Jesus crying aloud, he says, *'the light is with you a little longer. Walk while you have the light with you...'* (John 12.35) Jesus then departs and hides, and the light it seems goes with him as doubt spreads among those who had seen so much of what he had done. In this final acclamation of his public ministry in John, Jesus firmly points not to himself but points the way to God, demonstrating that, *'It is not enough just to follow Jesus – (as one commentator puts it) 'there is more work to be done in our lives so that we might have eternal life. This points to more a journey of faith that must be persevered with. It is life long.'*

In this ending of Jesus' public ministry, a challenge is laid down. Will we always be in darkness, or will we embrace the light and glory of God in our lives? Will we reflect, be conductors of God's countenance upon us, so that what seems hidden will be revealed? Our call is to help the hidden to be revealed.

Today we also remember Peter Chanel, who also was called out, set aside, commissioned to go and tell of the good news of Jesus. His journey is as difficult and treacherous as those first witnesses in Acts. And testament to his preaching and living beside and with the people of Fiji, the gospel seed was sown, took root and produced much fruit, but not before it cost him his life. The Fijian soldiers I came across in my time in the army, where not only good soldiers, passionate rugby players but also faithful in the gospel that was proclaimed to them 180 years ago. In full flight they too cry and sing aloud... it was always amazing to hear. It is just **'the way they tell 'em.'**

The question for us is, how do we 'tell 'em?'

Philip