**Sermon**

**St Jude’s Day – 25 October, 2020**

**Text Jude 1-3; 17 - 25**

1 Jude,\* a servant\* of Jesus Christ and brother of James,

To those who are called, who are beloved\* in\* God the Father and kept safe for\* Jesus Christ:

2 May mercy, peace, and love be yours in abundance.

3 Beloved, while eagerly preparing to write to you about the salvation we share, I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

17 But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; 18for they said to you, ‘In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts.’ 19It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions. 20But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; 21keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to\* eternal life. 22And have mercy on some who are wavering; 23save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies.\*

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish in the presence of his glory with rejoicing, 25to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority, before all time and now and for ever. Amen.

**Introduction**

The Epistle Jude is a very strange sort of ‘love letter’. It is highly combative and contains references to apocryphal writings, detailing questionable events, which are not taken with any great seriousness, but it is an important letter, none the less. It is written to God’s beloved – God’s loved ones. It was a message they needed to receive. It would seem that some people had come into the church and were unsettling it with strange teachings. St Paul, of course, had to deal with similar things in a number of his churches. We don’t know exactly what the troublesome teaching was. It could have been those who were promoting ‘Jewish’ practices, or, more likely, Hellenists who were promoting some more libertine and questionable practices. Whatever it was, these troublemakers were upsetting Jude’s people, and like any good Pastor he wanted to keep the people on track.

**1 -Those who are called – The Beloved**

But what I want to highlight this morning is that it is written to those who were loved by God. Love is a dominant theme in Jude. Jude is reminding his readers that they are indeed loved. It may be that they did not feel much loved, or the troublemakers were sowing seed of doubt. Is God really a loving God? Does he really love me? The answer of course is resounding yes!

Sometimes we can question whether God loves us, and, sometimes others question that of us. If God is a God of love, as you say, then what about wars, earthquakes, coronavirus, and so on? But these things are part of the natural order or the consequences of human foolishness, but God’s love for us still stands in the middle of these things. We are loved, always, and despite our failings. God’s love is unconditional.

**2 - Being built up in the faith**

Jude is also encouraging his readers to be firm in the Christian faith. In all probability, Jude is thinking of a summary of the faith; something like an early creed. However, the God of Love must have been at the heart of Jude’s thoughts. It is this that that his readers are encouraged to stand firm on. Their faith was being challenged by others, and Jude’s response is to stand firm on the ‘faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints’. Standing firm on the God of Love enables us to face many challenges and temptations.

It our own era, there doesn’t seem to be much interest in the Gospel. This is often because of misunderstandings. Many people see the church simply as a moral watchdog or archaic or out of tune with society or irrelevant. But that’s not the way we see it. We see ourselves as disciples of Jesus. We see ourselves as the ‘beloved’, and it is this very same love that we want others to take hold of. We are not here to impose heavy burdens on others, but to invite others to come and meet the one who truly loves them.

Another problem is that so often people see Christians at odds with each other. They may, with some justification, question that if these people are really on about love then why don’t they live it. Being grounded in the faith means, I think, being grounded and rooted in love. So much so that it becomes our identity. As John’s Gospel reminds us:

*35By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13: 35)*

**Some takeaway points:**

1. Remember we are loved. The foundation of our faith – God loves us - ALWAYS!, even when, and especially, when you don’t feel like it. Let no-one take that from you.
2. We are to be God’s love in action. Sometimes that is extremely hard to do with so many conflicting views in any given church community. It can be so easy to fall into conflict. Sometimes, hard things need to be said, but never should they be said out of anger of to hurt someone, but always out of love. Yes, hard to do, but that is our call as the ‘beloved’. Jude wanted to snatch people out of the ‘fire’, and so some hard words had to be said about the troublemakers.
3. In a world that seems to be very angry at the moment, a message of love might just help. As the church we have been given this message, and, perhaps, if we say it loudly enough some might listen. If we show it in our lives, then some might just follow.

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