

Sunday 30th August (12th after Trinity)

Reading: Matthew 16 v 24

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

Reflection: Reverend Canon Neil Bowler

Reflection: Our reading today, from Matthew's gospel, comes at a time when we're told that Jesus is trying to help the disciples understand that he will soon no longer be physically with them, as the time for his death and resurrection approaches. The disciples react of course, like many of us would when we might receive news that we don't want to hear, they don't want to accept that this is really going to happen. Jesus is however, adamant, that this has to be what happens and doesn't shy away from making it as clear as he can, of the difficult choices and times that may lay ahead for those who choose to follow him.

The disciples are given clear guidance by Jesus that they will have to make a choice when the time comes of his death; will they disown Jesus and simply go back and follow the path of their life they were following before he came into their lives, or will they continue to accept Jesus and his teaching, as the one they will continue to follow and so deny the earthly things that might lead them astray. The choice is theirs.

As individuals, as a church family and as a community, we too are faced with making decisions and choices all of the time, sometimes the decision of what to choose is an obvious one, whilst at others the decision isn't always so clear cut and is sometimes very difficult. In what direction of travel in our faith will making a certain decision take us? In our decisions and choices are we denying or accepting Jesus?

There are many times when in the decisions that we might take we have to carry our own metaphorical cross and decide: do we put ourselves first or do we put Jesus and therefore God first? As human beings we inevitably make decisions that we might regret later, it's part of being human to make mistakes, but we have a God who will continue to forgive us for the mistakes we make. No matter how many mistakes we might make in our decision making, as long as we continue to turn to him in our lives, God will be there, waiting to embrace us.