



Trumpet's Sound

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"Trumpet's Sound" is a bi-monthly publication of the Armenian Evangelical Brethren Church in Sydney, Australia.

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Cover photos: Armenian flowers, ACM mission 2014.



Praise and prayer points

- Give thanks for all the outreach meetings held in April.
- Give thanks that the borders are kept safe.
- Pray for Nagorno Karabakh and the 120,000 in lockdown now for over 80 days.
- Pray for the arrival of container #25 to Armenia.
- Pray for the Lord to be glorified as we celebrate ACM's 25th anniversary.
- Pray for all who will join the mission team in July this year.
- Pray especially for the many children in ACM's care.

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who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.*

In Tough Times

In our lives we all face tough times. Believers are not exempt from problems. We face times of failure, times of sickness, family issues, difficulties at work, difficulties with children, financial problems, sometimes unimaginable situations, and we keep it in our hearts. At times we cry out with anger, "Why Lord, why me?"

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast (1 Peter 5:10).

I love this verse because it assures us that sufferings are only for a little while. The Lord has an expiry date for them. We at times forget that we are on this cursed world and that heaven is our destiny. Many of the prophets, the saints, the believers in the Bible, including our Lord Jesus, suffered on earth.

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope (Romans 5:3-4).

Hope, hope in our Lord Jesus, hope in the one who loved us so much that He gave us His Son to save us from sin and eternal suffering. Our hope is in Christ alone.

Our sufferings cannot be compared with our Lord Jesus nor with any of the disciples, nor with the believers who lived in the times when they were sent to the lions.

Present Suffering and Future Glory

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed (Romans 8:18).

Many times suffering is present because the Lord is building our character in Christ. I myself have gone through difficult times. As long

as we are in this world we will always face them. We are not immunised against them!

But there are many important lessons that we learn through our sufferings and here are few that I have learned.

1. Early morning, He is with me.
2. He is the one that I need to follow.
3. He is the only one who gives life and can take it away.
4. I must trust in God fully.
5. I am to wait upon His leading.
6. As long as I remain in Him I am safe.

May the Lord bless you as you live out your faith in Him.

HK



John, the Apostle of Love

We begin a series about the man many have called the Apostle of Love. He is John, the writer of the Gospel that goes by his name, the three epistles or letters, and the book of Revelation.

I really love to read what John wrote for one simple reason. He joined the band of Jesus' disciples as a young man – probably not out of his teens, and he lived, according to reliable witnesses, until about the year 100. They say that in the end he had to be carried to Christian meetings, and that as he greeted people, he would always say “Little children, love one another”. To be left with that testimony is pretty good, I think.

But that is not the reason I so much value what John wrote. I really value it because here is a man who had, as we say, “seen it all”. As a

young man he shared in Jesus' earthly life. He was one of the very first followers of Jesus. Mark describes his call in Mark 1:19-20.

John came from a well-to-do family in the fishing business, a vital industry in that day and place. It is probable that John had already heard of Jesus through John the Baptist, and that he had gone with Andrew to talk to Jesus and spend a day with him. Now, Jesus approaches him and calls him to follow as a disciple. It appears that John does not hesitate but immediately follows Jesus with his elder brother James.

So for three years John lived with Jesus and the 12 disciples. He saw the miracles: sick, lame, blind all healed; dead raised; storms stilled; remarkable, arresting teaching such as no-one had heard before, and then the transfiguration where Jesus suddenly became much more than John could have previously imagined; the betrayal, arrest, trial and crucifixion. He saw it all. And then the resurrection, the ascension, and Pentecost – that unforgettable, life transforming experience of the Holy Spirit. He saw thousands converted in a day. He saw the growth of the church, with all its difficulties from outside and from within, and he witnessed the death of many of his fellow-disciples. His brother was martyred, and he himself suffered exile on the island of Patmos. John had experienced it all.

And now, at the end of this long and amazing life, he began to write. And when he wrote, it was different from the accounts left by his fellow disciples, Matthew, Mark, and then Luke the physician. It was different I think, because John had had time to reflect on what it all meant. Had he followed the Son of God or just a prophetic figure. Was all worthwhile – the stress, the suffering, the pain, the sorrow in his life. And at the end of such a life, his testimony was that it was all true, it was all worth it and he wanted the world to know the truth of the One he had faithfully followed.

That is all clear when we read his writings. He wrote “these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”.

That's why John wrote. It was so that we could believe the truth

and have eternal life through the name of Jesus. Come with me to the three letters. In his first letter we read this explanation: "These things we write so that your joy may be made complete" (1 John 1:4). John wrote the letter so that a Christian reading it might be filled with joy. It was totally what Jesus wanted for His people. Jesus prayed to His Father at the end of His ministry that "they may have the full measure of my joy within them" (John 17:13).

Then, in his second chapter, John gave this as his purpose: "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1). He wants us to stay close to Jesus, far from the reach of the evil one, or our old nature. "So that we will not sin."

And third, at the end of the first letter, "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life". He wants us to know for certain that we really do have eternal life through trusting Jesus; through His grace to us alone.

John writes, "I want you to have full joy, I want you not to sin, and I want you to know that you have eternal life." These are his reasons for writing, and these are the things we should expect from reading what John has left for us.

But John was not always such a loving, godly person. As a young man, and especially as a young follower of Jesus, he had a lot to learn. Jesus called him and his brother James "Sons of Thunder". Not a title for a gentle, loving person! But Jesus knew him.

This is the John who was part of an argument about who was the greatest of Jesus' disciples (Luke 9). Jesus, you remember, pointed them to a little child and told them, "The one who is least among you is the one who is great." Then John encountered someone who was ministering in the name of Jesus but was not one of the twelve. He told Jesus that they had tried to prevent this person from stealing their thunder. But Jesus rebuked their pride. "Do not stop him," He said, "for he who is not against you is for you." Then later, Jesus sent the disciples into a village of Samaria to arrange for their coming. But nobody would welcome them when they realised they were head-

ing for Jerusalem. Samaritans disliked Jews. James and John were indignant that their Master should be treated so badly. They asked Jesus, "Do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" You remember Jesus' answer? "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of! The Son of Man did not come to destroy people's lives, but to save them." Young John, though a devoted follower, had really no idea of what it meant to be Jesus's disciple. He had a lot to learn from the Master.

Finally, James and John, led by their mother Salome, thought they could secure the highest places in Jesus' kingdom by getting in first with the request: "Give the command that these two sons of mine may sit one on the right and one of the left when you come into your kingdom" (Matthew 20:21). Again, Jesus' response indicates how much they have to learn. "You do not know what you are asking." "Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant."

John had a lot to learn even though he was a follower of Jesus. But as he learnt, his liabilities were exchanged for assets. He matured. Areas in his life of greatest weakness were transformed into his greatest strengths. This can happen in our lives as well when we allow the Master to change us.

You and I have had a lot to learn since we became followers of Jesus. How much have we learnt?

Then the day came – the momentous day when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and John. And John, like the rest, became a new man. A man who had been transformed literally into one that church history calls the apostle of love. That theology of love appears in his Gospel and in his letters. John writes that God is a God of love, that God loved His Son, that Jesus loved God his Father, that God loved Jesus' disciples, that Christ loved the disciples, each one of them as individuals, that God loves the world, that Christ expected men to love Him, that Christ taught that we should love one another, and that love is the fulfilling of the whole of the law of God.

There is much more we could say about John's life. How he lived close to Jesus, valued his position as a disciple whom Jesus loved, saw

Jesus raise a young child to life, witnessed the agony of the Master in the garden before his arrest, stood at the cross and accepted the commission to care for Jesus' mother, ran to the tomb and found it empty, and then, when lost after Jesus' death, was one of the seven who met the Lord on the beach and saw him forgive and restore Peter.

In all this there is great hope for you and me. We, like John, are far from what we should be for Jesus. We bear the responsibility of representing Jesus in our families, our community, our world. But as we see how Jesus transformed John, and as we hear the teaching of the aged John, inspired by the very Spirit of God, we too will learn and grow to be more and more like the Master who loved us and gave Himself up for us. Please pray with me that all our lives we will still grow to be more like Him.

Dr Paul Whiting

Just a Few Words (1)

Thirst

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink" (John 7:37).

In these words, spoken during the Feast of Tabernacles when Israel remembered and celebrated the Lord's saving power and love, we hear the Lord Jesus inviting the thirsty among the crowd of worshipers to come to Him in order to have that thirst fully satisfied.

In their midst stood the One who alone could meet the deepest longing of their heart, perfectly and abundantly.

But the people were not thirsty. They were not mourning because of their sins. They were full, rich, satisfied. They did not long to be freed from the burden of sin and to be reconciled to God.

And so, because they were not thirsty, they did not come to Him, and they did not drink.

Do you long to have peace with God? Are you thirsty?

God Acts in Judgment

Pharaoh punished: Israel set free

After the three days of darkness Pharaoh offered to let the people take their children with them as they went to worship the Lord, but they could not take their flock or herds. This was definitely unacceptable to Moses. So Pharaoh decided that he was not going to make any further concessions, issuing an ultimatum. If Moses were seen in his presence again he would die.

Pharaoh's ultimatum

Pharaoh obviously thought he could end the problems he thought Moses was causing by threatening him with death. However, Moses readily agreed that Pharaoh would not see his face again. God had already given him details of the next (and last) plague which would fall on Pharaoh.

Moses told Pharaoh that at midnight the Lord would go out in the midst of Egypt, and every firstborn in the land of Egypt would die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne, through to the firstborn of the slave girl who was behind the hand mill, as well as all the firstborn of cattle. When that happened Pharaoh would order the Israelites out of his country.

Judgment about to fall

God told Moses He was about to pass through the land of Egypt. He would strike down every firstborn and would bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. God was doing two things. He was proving that he was the one and only God, and He was punishing Pharaoh for his constant rebellion against Him by refusing to be obedient.

An important aspect of God's principles of judgment is evidenced in what happened. When judgment comes it should rightly fall on all people because all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. God cannot be seen to have favourites who avoid judgment alto-

gether. But God also provides the means to escape judgment. How did this principle work out in the days of Moses?

The available protection

God provided a way of escape even though he was about to punish Pharaoh and his nation. At no stage did Moses restrict the plan of salvation to Israelites only. On the tenth day of the month, the people were to select a lamb that had no blemishes and keep it for four days. Then on the fourteenth day they were to kill the lamb at evening and take some of the blood and place it on the doorposts and the lintels of their houses. The blood was to be applied by using hyssop which had been dipped in the lamb's blood. Then the people were to remain in their houses until the morning.

If they remained inside their houses until then, they were protected from the destroying angel. God would "pass over" or hover over the doorway where the blood was and not allow the destroyer to enter that house. All inside the house were safe because God had guaranteed to protect all who obeyed him.

No Egyptians escaped

At midnight on the fourteenth day of the month, the destroying angel struck. There was death and wailing in every Egyptian home because there was not a house in which there was not someone who had died. We may ask questions. Did the Egyptians know about the coming judgment? Almost certainly they did. They were well aware of the struggle between Pharaoh and Moses. Could they have killed a Passover lamb themselves? We are not told, but there appears to be no restriction which limited salvation to only Israelites. What we do know is that there was only one way of escape and that meant believing and obeying God.

All Israelites were set free

Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. He and all his servants rose up in the night because of the great cry in Egypt. There was not a house where someone was not dead. Pharaoh issued his orders

to Moses: “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the Lord, as you have said. Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!”

Continuing principles

A number of truths stand out. God will not allow any man, whether a king or not, to permanently defy him. Judgment will fall sooner or later. However, when judgment is threatened there is always a way of escape and at the basis of the way of escape is the principle of faith.

God is far greater than the gods that men make for themselves. Egypt's gods had no power at all and were shown to be completely useless. However, in our society people erect gods they worship and in which they place their trust. Ultimately, these gods will not save them from the judgment of God.

Men cannot rebel against God with impunity. If people are determined to rebel against God, sooner or later they must take the consequences of their sins. The principles of Romans 1 are unchanging. God allows people to go the way they want to go, but judgment will come.

One day God will call men and women to give account of themselves to Him. It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.

To us today

It is still true that there is only one way of salvation. This is not through our best efforts, but through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in Him can salvation be found. Have you turned in faith to Him?

Don Stormer



Prophecies About Jesus: His Family Line

When a job is advertised there is usually a job description and a list of essential requirements (like qualifications, skills, and experience). What were the essential requirements for the Jewish Messiah? One of them is one's family tree.

Prophecies about the family line of the Jewish Messiah can be traced through the Old Testament. It is listed in detail at the beginning of the New Testament (Matthew 1:1-16).

A descendant of Abraham

God told Abraham, "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3 NIV). This means that one of his descendants will bless all the earth.

Fulfillment: Abraham's name is in Christ's genealogy (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:34). Paul wrote, "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16). God used the singular rather than the plural to emphasise it will be one particular descendant of Abraham who will bless the world. The covenant promises given to Abraham were fulfilled in the person and work of Christ.

But Abraham had eight sons (Genesis 25:1-2).

A descendant of Isaac

God told one of these sons, Isaac, "through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed" (Genesis 26:4). Once again, this means that one of his descendants will bless all the earth.

Fulfillment: His name is in Christ's genealogy (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:34).

But Isaac had two sons.

A descendant of Jacob

Isaac told one of these sons, Jacob, “May He [God] give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham” (Genesis 28:4). And God repeated His promise to Jacob saying, “kings will be among your descendants” (Genesis 35:11-12).

Fulfillment: His name is in Christ’s genealogy (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:34).

But Jacob had twelve sons.

A descendant of Judah

Jacob said about one of his sons, Judah, “The sceptre [rule] will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his” (Genesis 49:10).

Fulfillment: His name is in Christ’s genealogy (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:33).

But Judah had five sons (Genesis 46:12).

Then there is a gap of 9 generations (about 650 years) to Jesse.

A descendant of Jesse

Isaiah wrote, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1). And then he describes the Messiah’s millennial reign (Isaiah 11:2 – 12:6).

Fulfillment: His name is in Christ’s genealogy (Matthew 1:5; Luke 3:32).

But Jesse had eight sons, and David was youngest (1Samuel 16:10-11).

A descendant of king David

The prophet Nathan told David about a descendant of his, “The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house [dynasty] for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will

build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:11b-13). This is an unconditional covenant to establish a dynasty that will last forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

Fulfillment: His name is in Christ’s genealogy (Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:31). And the angel Gabriel told Mary, “You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus ... The Lord God will give him the throne of his father [ancestor] David” (Luke 1:31-32). David’s dynasty has been interrupted since the Babylonian captivity but it will be restored when Christ returns to reign over the earth (Acts 2:30).

David had at least 20 sons with his wives and there would be others with his concubines. The family line went through his son Solomon (Matthew 1:6).

So only descendants of king David would meet this requirement to be the promised Messiah. It’s an essential requirement for the job. And we know that Jesus Christ was the only person to meet all the essential requirements to be the promised Jewish Messiah.

Fortunately for us, Jesus was a Saviour and deliverer for Gentiles as well (Matthew 22:1-14). The invitation goes out to everyone, but only a few accept it (Matthew 22:14). For them Paul says, “the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:14).

Prayer

Father God, we thank you for promising to send a Messiah into this world. Your great plan of salvation was announced to Abraham about 4,000 years ago. And Jesus fulfilled this prophecy about 2,000 years ago. He satisfied this essential requirement for our Saviour. He had the right ancestry. So, we offer thanks and praise for all that you have done through Jesus. In Christ’s name, Amen.

George Hawke

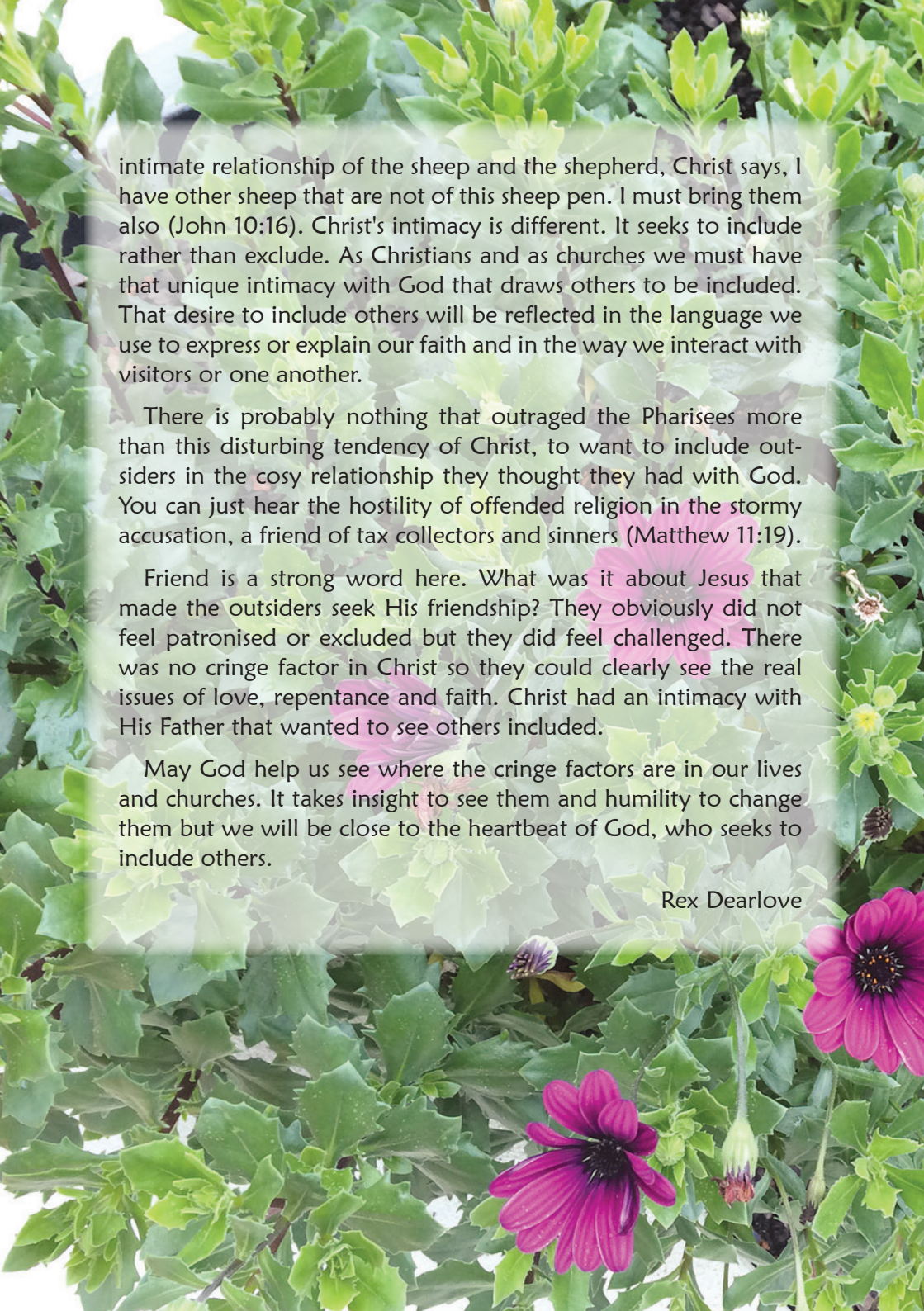


The Cringe Factor

One Sunday morning some years ago I found myself in an unfamiliar city. Wandering down the street looking for a place to worship, I came upon a little church. However, worship this Sunday morning was not going to be quite so simple. A couple of gentlemen standing at the door politely told me that if I could not present a letter confirming me as a worthy believer, they could not allow me to join in their worship service. Unfortunately I did not happen to have such a letter, so I walked back out into the street and God's warm sunshine. Later I noticed outside the church a large text proclaiming to the world the words of Jesus, "He that cometh to Me I will not cast out." John 6:37. That certainly gave me something to reflect on. An extreme example, for sure, and a story from long ago, fortunately.

It stands in stark contrast to a church service I recently attended. An immense effort was made to help non-church visitors both understand the message and feel welcome. An elder described their approach with a delightful phrase saying they were committed to taking the "cringe factor" out of church. I am sure we have all experienced the cringe factor – those times when things are said or done at church that make you secretly pleased that you have no non-church friends there on that particular morning.

The views reflected in these two opposite approaches to church, swing on whether we believe our intimate relationship with Christ is inclusive or exclusive. It is a fact of life that intimate relationships naturally tend to be exclusive. You only have to spend an evening in the company of a young courting couple to see that. There is an intimacy between the two that makes anyone else present feel like an outsider. This is the danger of church communities. In our intimacy with God, churches, like lovers, develop their own inside language, behaviours and understandings that naturally tend to exclude others, often quite unwittingly. However a church that is truly intimate with God is one that wants to include others, not exclude them. As He describes the



intimate relationship of the sheep and the shepherd, Christ says, I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also (John 10:16). Christ's intimacy is different. It seeks to include rather than exclude. As Christians and as churches we must have that unique intimacy with God that draws others to be included. That desire to include others will be reflected in the language we use to express or explain our faith and in the way we interact with visitors or one another.

There is probably nothing that outraged the Pharisees more than this disturbing tendency of Christ, to want to include outsiders in the cosy relationship they thought they had with God. You can just hear the hostility of offended religion in the stormy accusation, a friend of tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 11:19).

Friend is a strong word here. What was it about Jesus that made the outsiders seek His friendship? They obviously did not feel patronised or excluded but they did feel challenged. There was no cringe factor in Christ so they could clearly see the real issues of love, repentance and faith. Christ had an intimacy with His Father that wanted to see others included.

May God help us see where the cringe factors are in our lives and churches. It takes insight to see them and humility to change them but we will be close to the heartbeat of God, who seeks to include others.

Rex Dearlove