

Second Sunday Service June 2024 – Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit

Teaching point: to blaspheme against the spirit is to call good evil because it doesn't suit you to recognise it as good.

Sermon

Who chooses these readings... whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin...

What's blasphemy??

That's a bit heavy!! Let's do something more fun instead.

Children up to do the hokey-cokey.

The hokey-cokey is – allegedly – rude about the Eucharist. Blasphemy is being rude about God.

So Jesus is saying, if you're rude about the Holy Spirit, that's terrible. That's the worst thing you can do.

But this odd, isn't it. The Holy Spirit is God. Along with the Father and the Son, He's the Maker of all things. He's the King of the Universe. He's not bothered if you're rude to him. God being offended by us, is like a lion being offended by a mouse.

So why is Jesus so stern about it?

Clue: look at the story.

In the story Jesus is healing people. He's doing something unquestionably good. People are getting well, their problems are getting sorted. This is God happening here, life and joy and peace bubbling up.

And the people who dislike Jesus dislike him so much that they choose not to see it that way. They say, ah, it's not *really* good. It's not what it looks like. It's the Devil helping him to do that. I know it looks like good, but it's actually evil.

Jesus is saying, don't be like that. Don't call good things evil, just because it suits you that way. Don't be blind to what is right in front of you. Don't be so obsessed with the way you see things that you miss God happening right in front of you.

How might we miss God? Well, how about...

If you're on one side of a fight, it's very, very easy to miss the goodness in the people on the other side. It's very easy to get filled up with self-righteousness and hate ... use Northern Ireland ... where I grew up there was a nasty little war, and we thought the people on the other side were terrible, and they did do terrible things, and I really, really hated them ... and, that makes it very difficult to see when they might be changing. When they might do something good. When there might be a chance to move on from

the fighting. You can miss God... and that was in a country, but it might be a fight in your own family.

Or maybe if you're a religious person, and you're absolutely sure your religion is right, and the best, and you're sure it's God's best religion ... well, maybe that makes it difficult for you to see God at work elsewhere. Sometimes Christians have thought that Jews or Muslims or Sikhs must just be a bit stupid, or a bit wicked... we've not been very good at seeing God happening among them. Jesus is saying, don't be blind. The Spirit is at work there too. Just because they're not Christians, doesn't mean God can't be there.

Or never mind other religions. Sometimes it's our own. Sometimes we can disagree so strongly with how other churches do things – those conservatives, those fundamentalists, so bigoted, so dim, so stupid – that it can be a bit hard to realise that actually, in many ways, they might be better Christians than us? That they might be more loving, more prayerful, more wise than us? Doesn't mean they're not wrong, of course. Just means that rightness, wrongness and holiness might be different things, and that God's with them just as much as he is with us.

Here's the clue. The moment, the moment, you find yourself looking at anyone with contempt. The moment you think, well, I know where God's definitely *not* going to turn up. I know exactly what He thinks of them, and He has much better taste than to be with them... well, that, my friends, is where you are getting ready to blaspheme. When you are getting so fixed, so trapped within your own way of seeing things, that you refuse to see goodness happening right in front of you. That you'd rather ignore it, or call it evil. Jesus was so stern about it, because he knew it could happen to all of us. Beware of contempt. It creeps into your life, and it is spiritual poison.