

I love the snake story we heard just now in Genesis 3. It's such a great story it's in our anthology about people's relationship with God, the Bible.

I wonder how did that story came about. Perhaps far away and long ago a group of people sat around a camp fire chatting. Someone said. Have you noticed - Snakes are the only land vertebrates without legs. (or words to that effect) Why is that? And someone replied

I think it's like this. Once upon a time there was a man and a woman - and a snake. They were friends with the loving maker of all. The creator gave the man and woman one simple rule to keep them safe.

Now the snake was really crafty. He waited until the creator had gone for a walk and then he said "Did God really tell you something bad would happen if you break that rule. Don't worry. You know you want to. It will be fine". So they did break the rule. The creator found out what had happened and there was an enquiry. The man said the woman had done it and the woman said the snake had done it. And the snake didn't say anything and looked very guilty. So the creator said to the snake "Because you have been so naughty it's no legs for you. You and all your family will have to slide and wiggle around for ever and people will hate you and you will hate them. **You** will try and bite their heels and **they** will try and stamp on you.

And that O best beloved is why snakes have no legs.

Let's just hold the snake story, a myth from before time began. Let's turn to today's story about Jesus. Jesus didn't talk much about the past. but he did say a lot about how things **were** in the present and how they **could** be in the future.

In our gospel today Jesus was busy telling people about God's love and forgiveness. Someone called out to him that his family were at the door hoping to see him. But Jesus **didn't** do what **we** would do. He **didn't** stop what he was doing and go to his family. He said something very unexpected.

"My mother and my brothers and sisters? Hey – listen up. My family is bigger than that, much bigger. **All of you around me now** are my family, my sisters and brothers. **Everyone who lives their lives trying to please God is part of my family.**"

Amazing – so if we are trying to follow Jesus, to be a friend of Jesus, we become part of **his** family as well as **our own**. We become part of God's family, we have new relations, we all become brothers and sisters to each other.

But how big is God's family? Pope Francis reminded us of the answer to that question by calling his recent letter to the world Fratelli Tutti – We are all sisters and brothers together, everyone in the world

As followers of Jesus we should be showing God's love in all that we do and **say**.

Many people **do** a lot – they work hard and show God's love in the practical things they do for neighbours and friends. Many people give money to charities that work in a practical way to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters.

But part of the reason our brothers and sisters are in need lies in the way the world is run. **And that part that needs changing.**

Coincidentally today is Tax Justice Sunday –and I don't mean personal income tax. Tax is a hot topic at the G7 , a meeting where the 7 richest countries in the world talk about what they can do with all that money. I hope some good decisions will be taken. And I also hope the 7 will not forget the other 190, especially those at the bottom.

The snake is still around. – whispering “Did God **really** say that you were to act justly and to love mercy. Don't worry. Everything will be fine if you carry on as you are. “

Jesus went about sharing his radical message of love and peacefully pointing out what was wrong with the societal structures of his time. He caused great offense to those in power.

As we try to do the will of God – welcoming all to the family and travelling with them towards the glorious freedom of the children of God – as we follow Jesus on that exciting journey- we must keep stamping on the snake