

Introduction

- What is Jude to you?
 - the Beatles song, "Hey Jude"?
(written by Paul McCartney as John Lennon and his first wife Cynthia splitting up - Paul "felt particularly sorry for Julian", their son...)
 - Or the actor, Jude Law?
(Cold Mountain, Road to Perdition, Artificial Intelligence: AI, The Talented Mr. Ripley...)
- Also a little known book in the Bible!
 - brought to mind by doing 2 & 3 John in the last couple of weeks
 - (and may well do Philemon next Sunday evening...)
 - but also the key theme the book plays relates to what we were thinking about this morning from Mark

Jude

- Brother of Jesus, by implication ("brother of James")
 - note humility - doesn't draw attention to his divine big brother, use that as a lever of authority!
- Writing to a specific situation, though we don't know exactly where.
- Probably around about 70-80AD, when Jude would be in his 60s-70s
- As with so many of the NT Letters, drawing the church and the individuals to whom he was writing back on course.
- Two themes in particular emerge:
 - Clarity & Compassion

Clarity (vs.3-16)

- A large chunk of the letter is a warning against certain individuals and their teaching:
 - and its quite a warning - written in a very graphic way!
 - warning comes in form of summary of chunks of OT history, of judgements coming against particular people or groups of people:
 - (v.5) Israelites saved out of Egypt, many later judged;
 - (v.6) angelic rebellion along with Satan.... cast out of heaven;
(this comes in the context of popular belief at the time; Jude is not necessarily agreeing with the belief in such an angelic rebellion, but certainly using it as an example of the danger of getting away from God's commands)
 - (v.7) Sodom and Gomorrah, sexual immorality... burned;
 - (v.11) Cain & Abel, murder out of envy... cast out to be a restless wanderer (Gen 4:13) Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear."
 - (v.11) Numbers 22/23; Peculiar series of incidents, including Balaam not perceiving the Lord's angel preventing him going to prophecy for profit;
 - (v.11) Korah & followers rebelled against Moses authority, resenting his closeness to God... and God caused the ground to open and swallow them up.
- Jude is using all of these examples to warn of danger:
 - go down the path I'm warning you about, and you'll be facing the same judgements that... the Israelites out of Egypt... the angels who rebelled... Sodom & Gomorrah... Cain... Balaam... Korah all faced!
- But what is the danger?
- The key is verse 4:
 - "They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."
 - if you are forgiven... then it doesn't matter if you sin even more!!!!
- But Jude says that such a belief actually denies Jesus Christ!

- And this is where the connection with this morning comes!
 - recap morning sermon in Mark 14:26-42, Jesus in Gethsemane - human failure & sin met by Jesus drinking the cup of God's wrath on our behalf
 - what a wonderful salvation!!
- But that salvation has been won for us and gifted to us so that we might become holy, like our Lord Jesus
 - in other words, to say "I can get away with this, I'm forgiven" is to mock the agonies Jesus went through for us...
 - our holiness is freely won for us by Christ... but to flaunt our unholiness is to crucify again the Lord
- Don't think we today go in for the explicit version of this heresy...
 - we've become more subtle than that!
 - but I do think we've become infected by the spirit of the age which whispers in our ears that "it doesn't really matter...."
 - eg keeping Sunday special; shop... maybe not our main shop, but convenience...
 - money: (1 Timothy 6:10: For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.) - multiple computers, videos, DVDs, cars... culturally appropriate, but essential?
 - maybe others.... honour your father and mother...? do not lie...? do not steal...?
- Do we allow ourselves to get away with some of these things?
- Jude's main point, his prime reason for writing is a plea for clarity on this point: don't allow your forgiveness to degenerate into license!

Compassion (vs.20-23)

- The second strand, reflected in some of his closing remarksss, is a strand of compassion
- Our faith is one of rescue:
 - Jesus came to rescue us
 - we are those who have been saved from the punishment of our sin
 - and we are called to live as rescuers, to persevere in seeking to pluck others from the sea!
- The practical outworking of that is mostly captured in vs.22-23:
 - *"Be merciful to those who doubt; snatch others from the fire and save them; to others show mercy, mixed with fear - hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh."*
- Merciful to those who doubt:
 - permission to doubt is hard to give... Alpha at Priestfield - video - we're often not good at that.
- Learning again & again to truly seeing the danger in not following Christ:
 - when we were in Edinburgh I remember a story that made the local papers; youngster who was rescued from a canal, having fallen in; he hadn't taken seriously danger of the water; but his rescuer did take the danger seriously, didn't just walk on by, but showed mercy!

Conclusion

- Clarity & Compassion
 - both together, not one without the other!
- Discussion questions over...

- Do you agree that we are in danger of turning grace into license?
- In what areas do you think this is most a danger?
- How can we be "merciful to those who doubt"?

Prayer

- *(24) To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy - (25) to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.*