

Parish of Central Exeter

19th Sunday after Trinity 10th October 2021

Here's looking at you!

Welcome everyone.

Introduction

We are using just two readings today:

Hebrews 4:12-16 The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword.

Mark 10: 17-31 What really matters.

Today's reflections on these texts are by Sheila. Intercessions are from Helen. Many thanks to you both. The title above should really end with 'kid', as said by Humphrey Bogart in the 1942 film, Casablanca.



Opening thought

Lord, suppose you had a FaceBook page:
think of how many friends you would have!

Would your profile photo include all three
of the persons in your Holy Trinity?

What would you list under *Life Events*,
you who are, who were and always will be?

What kind of messages might you post?
Would you only quote scripture - or say something new?

And the photos, O Lord!
Flowers and seashores created by you,
glorious sunsets, signed by the Artist,
babies renewing your promise of life,

But we don't need FaceBook for us to be friends,
your profile image is etched on my soul;
your dying and rising, the one life event
that feeds my faith and gives me hope...

Call to Worship

You meet me where I am, Lord:
not in my past
- I am no longer there,
not in my future
- where I've yet to arrive,
but always and only in the moment
- where I am...

You meet me where I am, Lord:
not where I used to be,
not where I ought to be,
not where I should be,
not where I'm supposed to be,
not where I want to be,
not where I pray to be,
not where you call me to be...

No, Lord,
you meet me here, now,
just exactly and precisely
where I am...

You meet me where I am, Lord,
with no scolding or chastising,
no listing of my faults and sins,
no finger-pointing guilt trip...

You meet me where I am, Lord,
and in the moment of our meeting
I find what I had lost:
your wisdom, truth and grace...

(This and the opening thought are taken from the Concord Pastor website)

Gathering Hymn

October 4th was the feast of St Francis of Assisi. This hymn was originally written by Francis of Assisi in 1225 as 'Laudato sia Dio mio Signore' and often known as the 'Canticle of the Sun'. It was paraphrased by the Revd Henry Draper in 1919. The music is German first published in 1623, and the version we use today was arranged by Ralph Vaughan Williams.

It is performed here by the Choir of Trinity College, University of Melbourne and the Australian Chamber Brass Ensemble.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJRqM45Y8Gk>

An act of confession

Indeed the word of God is able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. Hebrews 4:12-13

Who is this Word that cuts through our clutter,
sees when we sit and when we stand,
reads our moods and motives,
uncovers every secret
in our hearts?

Lord,

it seems that
you know us better
than we know ourselves.

Please mend what needs mending,
and fill our hearts with your love and light.

(written by Anne Osdieck and posted on The Center for Liturgy Sunday Web Site of Saint Louis University.)

Assurance of forgiveness

Committing everything to God, trusting in the One who redeems us, we decide to live as God's faithful and forgiven people. Amen.

The collect for today

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



New Testament Reading

Hebrews 4 12-16

The Word of God

¹² Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Jesus the Great High Priest

¹⁴ Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Worship music

‘Blessed Assurance’. This is one we all know and is performed here by an international virtual choir and orchestra, known as the Cherubim Orchestra. I think they may be based in Indonesia. The sound track lasts about 4 minutes and is then followed by very lengthy credits.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UipST0w40Us>

Gospel Reading

Mark 10: 17-31

The Rich Man

¹⁷ As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ¹⁸ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: “You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.”’ ²⁰ He said to him, ‘Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.’ ²¹ Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, ‘You lack one thing; go, sell what



you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’²² When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, ‘How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!’²⁴ And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, ‘Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!’²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’²⁶ They were greatly astounded and said to one another, ‘Then who can be saved?’²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, ‘For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.’

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, ‘Look, we have left everything and followed you.’²⁹ Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news,³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.’³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.’

Reflection

When you look at someone what do you see? Perhaps you notice their hair style (or lack of hair), the colour or style of the clothes they wear, the way they walk. If you have a conversation, what do you see? Do you pick up on accent or perhaps sense how the person is feeling? In today’s gospel reading we find out how Jesus looks at people.

Mark starts this story with the simple fact that as Jesus was starting on a journey a man ran up to him and knelt at his feet. However, Mark places this immediately after Jesus has accepted and blessed children saying that to enter the kingdom of God you need to receive it like a child (v15-16). This man asks how he can inherit eternal life – enter the kingdom of God. Jesus reminds him of the commandments – the scriptures show the way. The man agrees and says how he has kept these since his youth. Mark then describes Jesus looking at the man and loving him before telling him what he needs to do.

Steve Motyer (in BRF Guidelines, 5 March 21) notes that the verb ‘look’ is a compound one ‘with the connotation that Jesus could see beyond the surface to his heart, and he loves this man despite all the complexity and dividedness of his motivation.’ Jesus saw that this man was wealthy, and this was the barrier. The status, respect, security and indeed power that money provides prevented him from being, as a child, powerless and dependent. That was the way to enter the kingdom of God.

Motyer concludes ‘Jesus is talking about our heart. We could give away our houses and bank accounts and still long for the status, power and security that comes from having our own stuff piled around us. Give up that longing, he says. Follow me!’

On 30 Sept the BRF Guidelines had reached Peter's denial in Mark 14:66-72. Steve Motyer again commented on the way Jesus saw people. He notes how Jesus truly saw Peter and knew that his confident declaration that he would never deny him (14v31) would end up with him before a servant-girl doing just that. Then he writes 'but we know what Jesus does when he sees people in all their pride, weakness and false security: he loves them (10v21 – our man in today's gospel).

He also notes that in Luke's account after the third denial he writes 'the Lord turned and looked at Peter' using the same verb (Luke 22:61). The importance of all the details of Peter's failure Motyer suggests is that Jesus 'sees Peter's sin fully, in all its fear, pain and betrayal, and that means that, finally, *it doesn't matter*. It is covered.'

No readers of Mark's gospel have the experience of being seen by Jesus in the direct, personal way described in these two stories but as our Hebrews passage suggests the word of God can do that uncovering. Sharp two-edged swords may not be common today, but sharp filleting knives are used as well as the tools for surgery. The writer states that scripture can 'judge our thoughts and intentions' and that we cannot hide from God. This is a fearful place to be.

The good news is that Jesus understands us in all our weakness. We can approach God, be forgiven and receive help because of what Jesus has done for us. The writer to the Hebrews talks about a high priest, as this is the language and imagery that the first readers would understand well. Today we may find other imagery more useful.

Jesus sees us fully and loves us, our sin is covered over, taken away, we are forgiven. Yet learning to be dependent on God and not on any abilities of my own is hard. To trust God fully and not to rely on my own resources is hard. To become like a little child to enter the kingdom of God is hard. The good news again is that 'for God all things are possible' (10v27c).

Prayer

With God all things are possible.
May we carry that confidence
into our daily life and work,
as we walk in Christ's footsteps,
guided by God's hand.

*(Adapted from The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009, Posted on the **Ministry Matters** website)*

Intercessions

Lord, in the Gospel reading for today, Jesus tells the rich young man that with God all things are possible, even things which are impossible for us. Help us to believe that with you all things are possible.

We pray for this fragile ecosystem we are part of, that all humans will become better stewards of it. We pray especially for everyone who is trying to tread more lightly on the planet and for those preparing for the United Nations Climate Change Conference next month, so that it results in real and lasting change for the better.

We ask this in Jesus' name – with you all things are possible.

We pray for those situations across the world that are in our hearts and minds, where people are suffering oppression, hunger, thirst, conflict, or the effects of natural disasters. Lord, sustain them, and bring them justice and peace.

We ask this in Jesus' name – with you all things are possible.

We pray for those situations and people in our own country that are in our hearts and minds: where people are facing shortages, poverty, abuse, illness or bereavement, or concerned about social or political developments. Comfort and help them, and inspire us to act in the service of your kingdom.

We ask this in Jesus' name – with you all things are possible.

We pray, Lord, for the Church in all its diversity, for our leaders and our members, that we may be your light in the world. Strengthen us to do your will, serving others. When we despair, give us hope. When we grieve, give us comfort. When we doubt, give us faith. Give us joy, even when we feel there is little in this world to rejoice about. Give us your peace.

We ask this in Jesus' name – with you all things are possible.

We take a moment now to earth these big prayers in one situation or for one person who is in our heart now. Lord, we hold before you _____.

**Merciful God, accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Father and Mother of us all,
Holy is your name.

Let justice and mercy fill all Creation
and let us recognize
that every thought and thing belongs to you.

Feed us with the bread we need for today.
Forgive our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Stand with us in trial and temptation.
Free us from the grip of all that is evil.

For you alone are creating our universe,
now and forever. **Amen.**

(from the Seekers Church)

Affirmation

Jesus said: Take up your cross.

We will follow you, O Christ,
into the needs of the world,
into the truth of our lives,
into the pain of our hearts,
into the presence of God. Amen.

(by Brian Woodcock, in Traveling to Easter with Jesus as our Guide, posted on the website of Patmos Abbey—The Order of Saint Columba.)

The Peace

If alone, smile and hug yourself (God does). If otherwise, share the Peace as appropriate.

A short Spiritual Communion

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.



Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

O God,
help me to trust you,
help me to know that you are with me,
help me to believe that nothing
can separate me from your love
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

An offertory prayer

We may not be in church, but we can still offer ourselves and our talents to God.

Blessed are you, God and creator of the universe,
as we offer you our activities, thanksgivings and our life.

We present ourselves, and our world, as we are and as you can make us,
for everything in heaven and on earth is yours,
and of your own do we give you. Blessed be God for ever.

*Because there is no Breaking and Sharing we can have only Spiritual Communion with Christ.
I'm sure you can find a way to use a few minutes of silence or conversation to enjoy this, and
make it a sacramental moment.*

*As we prepare for communion you might like to listen to or
join in the Taizé chant. 'In the Lord I'll be ever thankful'*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2hbH6kznJeA>

*Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may
wish to say*

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly,
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Post Communion Collect

Holy and blessed God,
you have fed us with the body and blood of your Son
and filled us with your Holy Spirit:
may we honour you,



not only with our lips
but in lives dedicated to the service
of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Commission & Benediction

It's not always comfortable, God,
but it is certainly good,
that you go straight for the heart.
You do not allow us to skate over the surface of life,
filling our days with dry legality,
and pretend righteousness;
No, you come at us from the inside,
challenging our thoughts and attitudes,
our motives and perceptions;
and shaping them into the fuel for change
that gives us hearts like yours,
and lives that are lived from the inside out.

**We praise you, O God,
for your uncomfortable grace,
your transforming Spirit,
and for the gift of lives
lived with integrity and compassion
from the inside out.
Amen.**

(John van der Laar. Sacredise.com)

With God all things are possible.
May you carry that confidence
into your daily life and work,
as you walk in Christ's footsteps,
guided by God's hand.

Adapted from *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2009*. Posted on the **Ministry Matters** website.

Closing Hymn

'O for a closer walk with God', sung here by
the choir of St John's College, Cambridge .
Words are on the screen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWVpafJX8A>

