

## **The Second Sunday after Trinity**

### ***Collect***

Lord, you have taught us that all our doings without love are nothing worth:  
send your Holy Spirit  
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,  
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,  
without which whoever lives is counted is counted dead before you.  
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen

### ***Readings***

#### **A reading from the book Genesis.**

**( 21.8-21 )**

The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.' The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.' So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

#### **A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans.**

**( 6. 1b-11 )**

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

**Hear the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.**

**( 10. 24-39 )**

‘A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

‘So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

‘Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

‘Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;  
and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

### ***Reflection***

As you can see I have underlined three phrases in the gospel passage and another two in our reading from Genesis.. Those words ‘Do not be afraid’ occur many times throughout the Bible. (Google says 105 times.) You can find them in the prophets and in the psalms. In the New Testament they are the words of the angel to Mary and then to the women on the day of the resurrection and many times they are said by Jesus himself and then by the writers of the epistles.. They are even in the first chapter of the book of Revelation.

Unfortunately, we are living in an age when fear can dominate us. Covid-19 has put fear into the lives of many of us. We live with terrorist alerts and the threat of global warming and natural

disasters. Fear can cause us to build walls of protection against the unknown and can also keep us from challenging urgent situations in our lives and our world.

In our gospel reading the fear that Jesus is talking about is the fear of witnessing publicly to the values he proclaimed by his life. 'We are called to be brave daughters and sons of God. We are asked to speak and act with courage and conviction. When he spoke to those first disciples he was not trying to minimise the opposition that they would encounter when they began to proclaim the gospel but he was saying that he would be with them and they were assured of God's loving care.

We are unlikely to be called to martyrdom like some of those early disciples but the values of the gospel can be challenging and we may feel threatened by the opinions prevalent in our culture. There can be a risk in taking a stand for justice for all, the fundamental equality of men and women and of black and white which is at the forefront of today's thinking; and also for the priority of forgiveness over revenge, of serving over acquiring.

Jesus was saying, 'Do not be afraid because when you courageously bear witness to me by your life, God will be watching over you.'

When we talk of God's care for the sparrows and that we are worth more, we so often fail to notice that he does not say that no sparrow will fall, but that he will know and care. When we quote God's care for us in the fact that he even numbers the hairs on our head – we fail to notice that Jesus does not say that we will not be among those who, in the course of chemotherapy will lose their hair, only that God knows and will never cease to care.

However this is not a call to go out blindly, we need to follow the lead of Jesus who throughout his life would wait until the time was right – to begin his ministry – to go up to Jerusalem. It is often useful to use the maxim, "What would Jesus do?"

As we come out of lockdown many will be concerned about the right way forward and there will be fear about possible consequences. The Church has given us a good lead on this by recognising that every parish would be different. Yes, churches could be open but first there must be a 'risk assessment'. Taking into account local situations and resources and only then deciding what would be. All four parishes in our benefice are opening a church but each in a different way.

And so as we consider when we should speak out and what is the right way forward for each of us as individuals, we need to remember God is with us and God loves us.

Jesus' promise to his disciples is summed up clearly for us by the mystic, Mother Julian of Norwich, when she says –

Jesus did not say, "You shall not be tempest tossed, you shall not be work weary, you shall not be discomforted."

But he said, "You shall not be overcome."

Or you may like to remember the words of the hymn based on Isaiah 43

*Do not be afraid for I have redeemed you.*

*I have called you by your name; you are mine.,*

When the fire is burning all around you, you will never be consumed by the flames.

When the fear of loneliness is looming, then remember I am at your side.

When you dwell in the exile of the stranger, remember you are precious in my eyes.

You are mine, O my child, I am your Father, and I love you with a perfect love.