

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Sunday 23 August 2020

Invitation

'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, for He who promised is faithful.'

Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity, Mercifully grant us such a measure of your grace, that we, running in the way of your commandments may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasures. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen**

Confession

For failing to love you with all our heart, mind, and strength,

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

For failing to love our neighbour as we love ourselves,

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy**

As we confess our shortcomings we trust Christ to cleanse us,

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy**

We receive God's promise:

If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness **Amen**

First Bible Reading Romans 12:1-8

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function,

5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith;

7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Second Bible Reading Matthew 16:13-20

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

14 So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

18 "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

19 "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

20 Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ

Reflection

My 1st sermon in a church building 60 years ago came from this very passage in Matthew. It is a very special passage for me because:

- It contains a message that is timeless
- it contains a challenge that is personal
- & it contains an answer that is foundational

Jesus & his disciples arrived at Caesarea Philippi a new city built less than 30 years earlier. It was a thriving, throbbing, and vibrant city that was inhabited by people from many cultures and different religions - it was a cosmopolitan community like many today.

On the outskirts of Caesarea was a pagan pantheistic site filled with statues to Roman, Greek, Canaanite, and humanistic deities. Surrounded by all these shrines Jesus turned to his followers and asked this timeless question, "*Who do people say I am?*" Jesus asked: "What does popular opinion say about me? What do all the people make of me? Who do the crowds say I am?"

1. This question confronts us with a timeless subject and message.

The Christian message is simple. It's all about Jesus. We judge everything by the 'J' word.

And there were a variety of answers to this challenging question (just like there are today). Basically people in 32 AD were saying: 'Jesus? He's just a man' (like Mary Magdalene sings in Lloyd Webber's Musical Superstar). Today many people dismiss Jesus as an irrelevance, a con-man, a disillusioned fool - 'he's just a man'

Other 'thinking' people were saying he's a teacher (a *Rabbi*), he's a holy man (like *Jeremiah*), he's a reincarnated hero (*John the Baptist* - beheaded and now raised to life), he's a prophetic man who hears from God (*one of the prophets*), he's a miracle working man (like *Elijah*). There's no end of opinions about Jesus.

2. But then Jesus turned the question round from a philosophical and theological discussion to a personal challenge, asking them: "But *who do YOU say I am?*" No more: 'What do they think?' but, 'What do you think?'

That's the challenge that Jesus places before us today. What do you think of me? What am I to you? Where do I fit in to your life and your plans?

This is the question we ALL have to ask ourselves: What is Jesus to me?

Peter, who was never backward in coming forward, blurted out: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

-You are the Divine - the Son of the living God. You are not just a man, you are the God-man, Immanuel, God with us - you are the revelation of all that God is.

-And you are the Deliverer. The One anointed to save us. You are the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. You are the revelation of God's salvation plan

'Well done,' Jesus responded. 'That's what My Father in Heaven has shown you. And it's on this foundational confession and commitment that *I will build my church*. And you Peter (my little stone) with this message will unlock the powers of heaven that will defeat evil.'

It's not what others say about Jesus; it's not even about what I think about Jesus; it's what God says and shows us. And what God reveals is the foundational truth of the Christian faith. Jesus is divine, he is the deliverer, and he wants to be our deliverer

As we hear Jesus' question. Who do you say I am? let's ask ourselves

Am I building my life on Jesus or something else?

Am I building on the rock or on the sand?

and let us confidently confess as the church throughout the ages has confessed: Jesus is Lord.

So, let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing.

Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness.

He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God has raised him on high, and given him the name above every name;

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every voice proclaim

That Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father Amen *Philippians 2: 6-11*

And, now we **pray**

Jesus, you are God of Gods and Lord of Lords, you reign over all things. We pray for all kings and queens, presidents and rulers to acknowledge you as Lord of all

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Jesus, you humbled yourself to take our humanity and be a servant. We pray for all those who serve us in the NHS, the caring professions, the judiciary, the business world and education. We pray for the un-employed, and those soon to end furlough

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Jesus, you bore the cross of shame and the sins of the world; you understand our weakness and pains; and you passed through death defeating its power and dispelling its shadow. We pray for all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Shepherd of our souls lead them in the valleys to find the rivers of stillness

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer**

Jesus before whom every knee shall bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, give us faith to trust you, courage to follow you, and joy to proclaim you as our Lord and our God

Lord in your mercy **Hear our prayer. Amen**

Lord's Prayer

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us thus day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us..

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,

For ever and ever Amen

Finally let us say the prayer that, like cement, binds us together, as living stones, in fellowship here and throughout the world.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit

Be with us all, evermore. Amen

Link to hear the hymn, *In Christ alone*

http://youtu.be/ENTL_li4GbE or
www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENTL_li4GbE