

United Benefice of Old Brampton and Great Barlow

Fr Stanley Monkhouse Sermon Archive

Year C – All Saints

Index

| | |
|---|----|
| All Saints 2010..... | 1 |
| All Souls Service, Wirksworth 2007..... | 2 |
| All Saints, 4 November 2007..... | 3 |
| Remembrance Sunday 2007..... | 4 |
| Remembrance Sunday 2007..... | 6 |
| 2nd before Advent, Proper 28..... | 7 |
| 2nd before Advent, Trinity 25..... | 9 |
| Christ the King, Sunday next before Advent..... | 10 |

All Saints 2010

What is the point of being a Christian?

What is the point of being baptised a Christian?

- Is it because your lives will be magically transformed?
- Is it because you will suddenly start to earn a lot of money?
- Is it because your life will now become all sweetness and light, without distress?
- Is it because people will respect you more?

You are recognising that there is something bigger than you.

You are recognising that you are human – gloriously human – with joys and sorrows, mistakes, bad tempers. You learn to accept that you are maimed. Larkin. And that you alone can not do everything, or cope with everything.

You are acknowledging that the way shown to us by Jesus is the way, the truth and the life. It will lead you into authentic living: honest, without pretensions.

You will need to work at it. It does not come easy, but it is worth the effort. You need to get to know the Lord through reading Holy Scripture. Reading the writings of others and through attending and reflecting upon the sacraments of the church. Especially HC. Like any skill, you will need to practise it.

*You're blessed when you've lost it all.
God's kingdom is there for the finding.
You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry.
Then you're ready for the Messianic meal.*

*You're blessed when the tears flow freely.
Joy comes with the morning.*

Count yourself blessed every time someone cuts you down or throws you out, every time someone smears or blackens your name to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and that that person is uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—skip like a lamb, if you like!—for even though they don't like it, I do . . . and all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company; my preachers and witnesses have always been treated like this.

*But it's trouble ahead if you think you have it made.
What you have is all you'll ever get.
And it's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself. Your self will not satisfy you for long.
And it's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games. There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it.
"There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others, saying what flatters them, doing what indulges them. Popularity contests are not truth contests—look how many scoundrel*

preachers were approved by your ancestors! Your task is to be true, not popular.

"To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life.

No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

"Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them

Drama of humanity

Enjoy the delights of the world.

Wisdom

In the passage Matthew's Gospel we are given the beatitudes as the pattern for Christian holiness. Many people, both Christian and non-Christian, have admired the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, of which the beatitudes are part, as a wonderful vision of what human life and society can be like. But, as the location of this passage on this celebration of All Saints suggests, the ideas of human life expressed in the Sermon on the Mount are not a model for human life as it can be apart from God. It is not a blueprint for the ideal secular society.

Rather it shows us what human life may be like if it is grounded and transformed by God's own life, His holiness. For, in the first place, it is Christ who is the one and only human being who is able to live according to the ideals found in the Sermon. His life as a human being manifests what it means to be blessed, since he is the one who is fully poor in spirit, who mourns, who is meek, who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, who is merciful, who is pure in heart, who is the peacemaker and who is persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Any other man or woman is blessed only insofar as he or she receives and displays the blessedness of Christ.

Today, then, as we honour the countless men and women who have manifested the values expressed in the beatitudes, let us also respond with them to the common call we all have to be holy, to be those whose lives are grounded in the life of Christ and the love of the Father.

All Souls Service, Wirksworth 2007

It has been my privilege to have been alongside many of you here tonight, perhaps even most of you, as you have dealt with the shocking news of a death, and have prepared for a funeral. I'm sure that David will join me in thanking you for trusting us with your precious memories, and treating us so courteously when you're at your most vulnerable – thank you.

Some of those deaths were expected, some unexpected. Some were a longed-for release, some a gentle slipping away. Some came at the end of long life with all its joys, frustrations and pleasures, and yet others assaulted us as the most shocking tragedies that can befall a parent, a sister, or a brother. For some of you these events are raw, whilst others look back across a landscape of 12 months, or so.

Despite this variety of experience, there are things in common. Sadness, feeling the loss of an important – no, not important, but a vital – part of our lives, without which we can't imagine being able to continue. Maybe there's unfinished business, plans unfulfilled. Separation: you can never fill the void left by that person because that person is unique and only that person can fill that void. Then there will be happiness and joy at some memories. A smile at the mischief they got up to.

But for many of us there is a sense of regret, of guilt, of something we wish we'd not said or done, now a longing to be able to set right misunderstandings. And maybe you feel that you are the only person who has said or done things that they regret but now cannot put right.

These feelings are common to many of us, and they are painful – but pain has its uses. Pain in our body tells us when something needs attention, and like pain in the body, pain in the mind is just as real. Untreated, it will close us down, shrivel us up into bitterness. Or it may drive us out to find comfort and consolation in the care of others. And I hope that this service is somewhere you can find comfort and consolation in the care of the church. I invite you to look on this service as an opportunity for healing.

The Christian story is about healing, and nothing but healing. All Jesus' ministry is a healing ministry, and we have heard one episode in the reading from John. Healing – not medical cure, but salving, relieving, coming to terms with, accepting, feeling at peace, being liberated from guilt, living in the moment. Every Christian encounter should be a healing encounter, freeing people from regrets in order that they can live with joy and fulfilment. This healing is not dependent on obeying rules, but merely of recognising that God's grace is there for us when we ask. The Spirit surrounds us in the air we breathe: it passes deep into our lungs and into our bloodstream, suffusing all our tissues. We are being bathed in it.

And bathing is a good analogy, for so often in Scripture, God's healing is seen in terms of healing water cleansing and giving life and beauty to a barren landscape. See this service as exactly that: imagine relaxing into a warm bath. Bathe in the candles, the warmth of the atmosphere, the friendship and companionship of us here. Acknowledge your sense of loss, and accept it. Give your grief over to the beauty of the sounds and sights. As you bring up the candles, hand your loved ones over. Hand over any feelings of regret, of loss. Better than continually picking at the scars. Bring all your emotions: joy at your memories, sadness at unfinished business, regrets about what you can't set straight, and lay them down with your candles, let go of them, and see them rise to heaven with the flames of love that you have lit. Then take back to your seats and your lives the joy and gratitude for their lives, the part of them that remains with you in happiness, so that you can move on in life.

And let us all take this opportunity, having laid down our burdens, to determine to live the rest of our lives in love and delight so that when we die, as we surely will, we ourselves will have no regrets.

Their souls are at rest with God, healed from earthly troubles. We will soon hear the anthem: *the spirits and souls of the righteous are in the hands of God where no torment can touch them* and as the sound wraps around you, you might recall the words said at the funerals: Go forth upon your journey from this world, in the name of God the father; in the name of Jesus Christ: in the name of the Holy Spirit; in communion with the blessed saints, and aided by angels and archangels, and all the armies of the heavenly host.

Sisters and brothers, all I ask you to do is bask like whales in the sea of divine love, healing divine love. Imagine yourselves dancing with the souls of those you have lost in the words of Ursula Vaughan Williams

Sing for your loves of heaven and of earth,
in words of music, and each word a truth;
that with your choiring angels we may share,
a word to light us thro' time-fettered night,
water of life, or rose of paradise,
so from the earth another song shall rise
to meet your own in heaven's long delight.

Amen

All Saints, 4 November 2007

WW (8 am), Elton, Bradbourne

What makes a saint? Perfection? Pious pleasantness? Constant sunny disposition? I hope not. I would rather it were authentic humanity, lived in its fullness of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. Painful longing for something beyond ourselves, the separation that makes us long for God-ness. Longing for the fullness of life that we see in Our Blessed Lord.

Isaac Watts: Give me the wings of faith:
*Once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears:
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears.*

This is what makes saints, not perfection but wrestling, like Jacob.

Hear the words of Blessed George Herbert wrestling:

*Ah my deare angrie Lord,
Since thou dost love, yet strike;
Cast down, yet help afford;
Sure I will do the like.*

*I will complain, yet praise;
I will bewail, approve:
And all my sowre-sweet dayes
I will lament, and love.*

Hear the words of Blessed Mother Teresa wrestling:

In my own soul, I feel the terrible pain of this loss. I feel that God does not want me, that God is not God and that he does not really exist.

Hear part of today's Gospel in a different translation:

You're blessed when you realise your need of God: God's kingdom is there for the finding. You're blessed when you're ravenously hungry: then you're ready for Messianic food. There's trouble ahead if you think you've got it made. What you have is all you'll ever get. There's trouble ahead if you're satisfied with yourself. Your self will not satisfy you for long. There's trouble ahead if you think life's all fun and games. There's suffering to be met, and you're going to meet it. There's trouble ahead when you live only for the approval of others. Your task is to be true, not popular. Love your enemies, live generously. Ask yourself what you'd like others to do for you, and then go and do it for them.

Be naked before the Lord, no pretences, no hypocrisy. Hide not your face from the world, present your face in full glory, in full imperfection, to the light of the Lord. Be honest. And persist. Isaac Watts again:

*They marked the footsteps that He trod,
His zeal inspired their breast;
And following their incarnate God,
Possess the promised rest.*

And if you want to know the way, be pleased to hear what he did say. You and I, sisters and brothers, are the saints of God.

Elton and Bradbourne: and here today we remember all those in this church dedicated to All Saints that have gone before us.

On a day like today, above all other, let us celebrate that, and let it inform all that we do.

And, above all, let your light so shine ...

Remembrance Sunday 2007

Elton, Bradbourne

May the words ...

Three words for you today: recall, release, resolve

First, we **recall** those who have died in conflicts. And please let us not restrict this to the two world wars of the 20th centuries. Women and men have died Korea, Falklands, Cyprus, Middle East, Egypt, Africa, Ireland. And now Iraq, Afghanistan: where a poppy has a different and altogether more sinister meaning that destroys lives in our country as well as causing wars in theirs.

I have never fought in armed conflict, nor am I likely to. I am one of the post war children whose life has been privileged ... But I've come to appreciate the nastiness of war. We sometimes choose to sanitise war by thinking of the dead: it is easier in some ways. We don't have to provide medical

care for the dead like we do for the maimed. We don't have to worry about the lacerations, the amputations, the psychological effects when we consider the dead. So let's remember too those who were maimed.

The problem with commemorations like this is that we sanitise the events we commemorate. Who was it said, if you want to forget about the nastiness of an event, arrange an act of commemoration. Please let us not forget that behind the ceremony and dignified remembrance today there are countless stories of real human tragedy. It was a woman of Derbyshire who first moved me, Vera Brittain from Buxton, who lost boyfriend, brother, friends. And as it inspired her, let us never forget the pain of such loss.

And then also, today we **recall** all our loved ones that we see no longer. Some of those deaths were expected, some unexpected. Some were a longed-for release, some a gentle slipping away. Some came at the end of long life, and yet others assaulted us as shocking tragedies. For some of you these events are raw, whilst others look back across a landscape of years. But no matter when, there are things in common. Sadness, feeling the loss of an important – no, not important, but a vital – part of our lives, without which we can't imagine being able to continue. Maybe there's unfinished business, plans unfulfilled. And for many of us there is a sense of guilt, of something we wish we'd not said or done, and regret that it cannot now be put right. These feelings are common to us all, and they are painful – but pain has its uses. Pain in our body tells us when something needs attention, and like pain in the body, pain in the mind is just as real. Untreated, it will close us down, shrivel us up into bitterness. Or it may drive us out to find comfort and consolation in the care of others. And I hope that this service is somewhere you can find comfort and consolation in the care of the church. I invite you to look on this service as an opportunity for healing.

This healing is not dependent on obeying rules, but merely of recognising that God's grace is there for us when we ask. The Spirit surrounds us in the air we breathe: it passes deep into our lungs and into our bloodstream, suffusing all our tissues. We are being bathed in it. And bathing is a good analogy, for so often in Scripture, God's healing is seen in terms of healing water cleansing and giving life and beauty to a barren landscape. See this service as exactly that: imagine relaxing into a warm bath. Bathe in the candles, the warmth and companionship here. Acknowledge your sense of loss, and accept it. **Release** your grief over to the beauty of the sounds and sights. As you light the candles, hand your loved ones over. **Release** feelings of regret, of loss. Better than continually picking at the scars. Bring all your emotions: joy at your memories, sadness at unfinished business, regrets about what you can't set straight, and lay them down with your candles, **release** them, and see them rise to heaven with the flames of love that you have lit. Then take back with you the joy and gratitude for their lives, the part of them that remains with you in happiness, so that you can move on in life.

Are we just going to stop at recalling and releasing, or shall we **resolve** to do differently? Do we expect God to intervene to change things. Perhaps it is we who need to change. We have been recalling those who obeyed orders, but those orders are made by people instructed to go to war on our behalf, we are told. On what basis are those decisions made? What was in Bush/Blair mind when the decision was taken to wage war? Pride? Delusion? Seeking a name in the history books? Since when did killing people ever solve problems? Vanity of vanity, All is vanity. Whether or not there a just war, any kind of violence is a separation from God: if we are violent, we separate ourselves from the divine and we come between our victim and God – indeed it is in truth the perpetrator who is the victim. When we vote for people to represent us, please let us **resolve** to cast our votes wisely, and remember that we are instructed in the Gospels to do nothing to someone else that we wouldn't like them to do to us.

Let's remember that if I say I am the best, the greatest, people call me ridiculous, but if **we** say we are the best, the greatest, people call us patriots.

Recall, release, resolve. Sisters and brothers, I ask you to bask like whales in the sea of healing, divine love. Imagine yourselves dancing with the souls of those you have lost in the words of Ursula Vaughan Williams

Sing for your loves of heaven and of earth,
in words of music, and each word a truth;
that with your choiring angels we may share,
a word to light us thro' time-fettered night,

water of life, or rose of paradise,
so from the earth another song shall rise
to meet your own in heaven's long delight.

Let us all take this opportunity, having **recalled** our losses and **released** our burdens, to **resolve** to live the rest of our lives in love and delight so that when we die, as we surely will, we ourselves will have no regrets.

Amen

Remembrance Sunday 2007

11th November 2007

May I speak and may our hearts be open to the word of God in the name of the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

What are the thoughts that we call to mind as we stand silent for two minutes every year? For many of you it is personal recollections of comrades, some fallen, of loved ones, direct experiences of your own, some perhaps too deep to share. For people of my generation especially those of us who have no direct experience of conflict our minds may recall news footage or pictures of First and Second World War cemeteries.

Whatever our thoughts the common theme that runs ribbon like through the minds of all who observe Remembrance Sunday is the recognition of the sacrifice made by so many. We give thanks for the love for others shown by ordinary men and women under extraordinary circumstances. Theirs is a sacrifice made for humanity by humanity in response to inhumanity.

This year we mark the 25th anniversary of the end of the Falklands War. For me the Falklands War was the first conflict that I can remember and in preparing this sermon I have been thinking about what as a nation we ask our servicemen and women to do for us. Throughout my preparation two biblical texts kept re-occurring. The first are some words of Jesus and the second is the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Falklands War was, if there is such a thing, a traditional type of warfare. Just as in the First and Second War our servicemen were called upon to protect their fellow countrymen from attack. Jesus says in St John's Gospel "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". As we recall the names of those who lost their lives in the terrible global conflicts of the two world wars it is hard to think of a more fitting biblical text with which to honour their sacrifice. The same is true for those who, 25 years ago, journeyed thousands of miles to a small group of islands close to the Antarctic to liberate their countrymen from invasion.

As to whether the nature of conflict has changed since then, it is for the experts to say, but from a layperson's perspective the roles that we expect our service personnel to fulfil seem to become evermore complicated. Since the Falklands they have seen action in two Gulf Wars, in the Balkans, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan to mention only a few of the world's trouble spots to which we, as a nation, have sent our armed forces.

In the last 25 years we have also witnessed the spread of a new and frightening phenomenon; organised terrorism, no longer restricted to a regional or country basis but on a global scale. During that time we have increasingly been forced to ask who are our friends. And over those same 25 years we have sent our armed forces, both regular and territorial to intervene in those conflicts; to keep the peace in far off countries, among peoples of other cultures and other religions.

Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan a man who against all his cultural prejudices cares for a Jewish man who has been robbed and beaten on the road. Today if we were to tell this story we might tell it of a Palestinian man who cared for a Jewish man in the West Bank or a Sunni Muslim who cared for Shia Muslim in the suburbs of Basra or perhaps a British Soldier rescuing an Afghani or even the other way round. The parable speaks to us of humanity; of the duty of care we should have one for another which transcends cultural, ethnic or religious boundaries. In today's complex

world we expect our servicemen to be humanitarian ambassadors; to be today's Good Samaritans bringing relief from suffering.

My day-job involves me travelling around the Middle East. Last year I had to make a trip down to the very south of Oman close to the Yemen border to a place called Salalah. On a stretch of desert road halfway between the airport and the hotel my taxi broke down. I was tight for time and not being in the best of moods that day I got out of the taxi and began to walk along the road hoping to flag down another taxi. No such luck. 10 minutes later an Arab in full national dress stopped beside me in his car and offered me a lift. He dropped me at the hotel. I thanked him profusely. Smiling he said "I just wanted to show you that Arabs can be nice people". Later I paused to reflect whether I, if seeing an Arab in need of a lift would have stopped and made the same offer. The question is a valid one for Remembrance Day because if the answer is "No" then by what right do I send out my fellow countrymen to keep the peace for the benefit of my safety at home? If I am not prepared to be a good Samaritan in the relative safety of the UK why should I place servicemen and women in danger by sending them out to be good Samaritans overseas?

If today is to be more than just a ceremony then we must do more than simply remember the names of the fallen. Those who gave their lives and whose names we have recalled today deserve more than that. Remembrance Day is about honouring the sacrifice made by the fallen and the most fitting way to do that is by pledging ourselves to continue to work for peace; work for which they gave their lives.

Immediately after 9/11 a church and a mosque in Manchester came together and in groups of two, one Muslim and one Christian they went round their area collecting money. At each door the Christian asked for money for Bosnian Muslim refugees and the Muslim asked for money for families who had lost loved ones as a result of 9/11. The objective of terrorism is to divide communities, to sow misunderstanding which can be fanned into hatred. We honour the work and the sacrifices made by our service personnel when we build peace within our communities because only by fighting terrorism both at home and abroad will we ever eradicate it.

Religion is cited as the cause of many of the current conflicts in the world today. In previous years it was Northern Ireland. Today in Afghanistan and Iraq our service personnel find themselves keeping the peace between warring religious factions. Some of you today may not feel comfortable that this act of remembrance should be carried out within a Christian or religious context at all.

Christians are called to follow a man who gave up his life not just for his friends but for all, who told us the parable of the Good Samaritan to remind us that humanity extends across communities and who gave us just two commandments, the second of which is to

Love your neighbour as yourself

Today we remember those who have placed the needs and lives of others before their own; men and women who have loved humanity and in so doing have risked and lost their lives for others.

Their sacrifice demands more than just our remembrance of them it calls us to honour them by taking up the work for which they gave their lives. It demands that we pledge ourselves to strive for peace by loving our neighbour whatever their race or colour or creed.

Amen

2nd before Advent, Proper 28

18 November 2007

HC WW

Malachi 4:1-2a

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

Luke 21:5-19

A fantasia on red

- Red: the liturgical colour of today, part of the season of the Kingdom of God: red for royal.

- Red: Krasnaya, beautiful, Russian, communism. Red for beautiful.
- Red for poppy: beautiful poppies that signify carnage – why because of plant dormancy. New life from destruction. Red for remembrance.
- But poppies produce morphine which sends us to sleep: are we asleep to today when we can't let go of the past? And morphine is addictive. Red for dangerous.
- Red for blood: martyrdom, destruction. But blood fights disease, blood removes rubbish, blood brings oxygen. Red for paradox, contradiction.

Last week we brought together some of those themes in Remembrance ceremonies: blood red poppies signifying that redemption can come through battle, through destruction, through warfare, through the shedding of blood.

Battling against evil is part of our faith. It's a battle that rages inside each of us. Warfare is right in the middle of today's liturgy: Holy Holy Holy Lord God of hosts (or God of power and might in lamentable CW) – sabaoth – saba armies, armies of heaven, armies against evil. Holy destruction, as in Malachi's prophecy.

And that is how today's gospel can be read: Jesus talking starkly of destruction, the destroyer of old ways, all that the Jews held dear, removing the rubbish of the Temple, and bringing the oxygen of new life. Yes, new life can come from battle, from destruction. Remember the poppies: red not white.

Destruction of the temple is about destroying the old ways that bind us. Hanging on to old ways, old attitudes, is a form of idolatry. Think how much depression and mental illness is caused by being stuck in the past, unable to live in the present, tethered by attitudes, shoulds, oughts. They are addictions, quite as much as those that come from dependence on the juice of the poppy.

It's painful to get rid of all that we hold dear: opinions, the latest gadget, fashion, a lovely house, societies we belong to, appearance, books, guilt – not letting go but a clean out, when once we get going, is cleansing, liberating, freeing, salving.

We're promised in the beatitudes that we're most blessed when we have nothing. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you: only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.

Salvation, liberation, redemption comes when we give up ties that bind, that keep us tethered to possessions, to unnecessary ways of doing things. When we've lost these addictions, this closed-mindedness, these attachments, we're freed up inside, free to seek the Kingdom, which the Gospels tell us is the most important thing. Seek ye first ... Don't worry about missing out on material goods – another hard message when we are confronted every minute by that all pervading evil, the advertising industry.

Red for Kingdom, Red for the Kingdom of God in our blood, in our veins if we could but recognize it. The kingdom not of the reasonable God of wishy-washy liberals, or the vengeful God of intolerant fundamentalists, but the Kingdom of the unknowable God who laid the foundation of the earth and who can not be squeezed into the limits of human thinking. There's a wideness in God's mercy The unknowable, immortal, invisible, inaccessible, God of divine wisdom, not human wisdom.

Divine wisdom, present alongside God at the moment of creation, the stardust out of which the cosmos is made, all around us, in the air we breathe, personified in Christ, the always challenging, always unpredictable Jesus who said in today's gospel "I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ... By your endurance you will gain your souls."

We can't explain the wisdom or the ways of God; we simply keep going, push on in faith as Paul urged the Thessalonians to do.

Red for the church militant, not the church hesitant or the church petulant, but the church militant. Onward Christian Soldiers.

Red for salvation. Red for glory.

2nd before Advent, Trinity 25

18 November 2007, WW Evensong

Daniel 6 (Lion's den)

Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23 (Sower)

Some disconnected observations on the parable

Look at the parable as a whole

Gardening, agriculture, An everyday story of country folk. We might forget what a very ordinary example this would have been for Jesus' listeners. Everyday work likened to the kingdom of God. There is something here about God's kingdom being here in ordinary daily work, in the midst of ordinary life.

George Herbert:

*Teach me my God and king
In all things thee to see*

*A servant with this clause
makes drudgery divine:
who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
makes that and the action fine.*

John Keble: New every morning

*If, on our daily course, our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice.*

*The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God.*

Finding god in daily life is fundamental Christian teaching. God became human to share in our experience and then, in the Ascension, to take his humanity and our humanity to heaven, divinized. God became man so that man might become God.

If we do not encounter God in the midst of daily life, where will we encounter him? God in all things.

And let's not be impatient, just steadily get on with it, as Daniel did, as the sower did. Live in the present, don't worry about the future.

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

Now think about interpreting some details of the parable of the sower

Let's imagine ourselves as the ground – the usual interpretation, with God as the sower.

- We may be the path, seed snatched from us
 - We may be rocky ground, seed does not take root.
 - We may be thorny ground, and the way gets choked by thorns – the cares of the world, the worries, the distractions and deceitfulness of material things.
 - We may be the good soil: we hear the word and understand it.
- I never really noticed before this last bit – the need to understand it. That commits us to work, to effort, to intellectual study. We are required not merely to read, but to mark, learn and inwardly

digest. The word needs to take root in our hearts and minds, and this requires, as in gardening, digging deep to prepare the ground.

What prepares us? Adversity, digging deep into ourselves to root out the weeds within, to let the light in so that our lights can shine out.

What do I need to do it? Courage, effort, energy, clear vision.

Now let's imagine ourselves as the seed

- By witnessing to what is right, good, holy and true, we help to plant Jesus's message in the hearts and minds of those around us.
- What we say and do. Not gossiping, spreading rumours.
- Again a requirement to clean ourselves out.

Being ourselves, not pretending to be what we are not.

- We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.
- This is not self-effacement, or fake humility. Humility is knowing where you stand with God: good and bad.

The need for selflessness was often taught to many of us as being the need for self-deprecation. This is not humility. If you express our full humanity as only you can do, you are letting your light so shine before others that ...

Now we can imagine ourselves as the sower

- The sower scatters the seed. He does not choose to scatter it only on the ground he knows to be good, but he scatters it everywhere. Think of middle eastern landscape, or the Burren in Ireland.
- My experience with students – can never tell.
- Don't seek compliments, or look for results: JFDI.
- It's not up to us to choose where to sow. We scatter it everywhere.
- Something about the universality of the Christian message here. Is this universality mirrored in church congregations here in WW. From what I have seen I would say not.

What about you and me as the sower, helping prepare other ground

The glory of God is in everyone

- Excluded from school, family, home, sleeping rough
- On drugs. Can't read and write. Guilt.
- Christ's message of liberation from guilt and addiction is for them. But wouldn't set foot in this place
- What have we done to put them off?
- How does the bulk of the population see us?
- Establishment

Let's do something for them. Hope 08.

Let's go into the lion's den.

Christ the King, Sunday next before Advent

25 November 2007

Bonsall Euch (AM)

Christ the King

Many of the parables are about the Kingdom of God, the central theme of Jesus' message. The Kingdom of God is not about heaven, not about an afterlife, but is life on earth. As the Lord's Prayer reminds us: Your kingdom come, on earth.

Though it is something great; it begins as something small.

- It is like a mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, that grows into a huge plant (Mark 4:30-32)
- Moreover, mustard is a weed; once it gets started, it spreads out of control. The kingdom is like a seed growing secretly in the earth (Mark 4:26-29), like leaven spreading through flour.
- It is like a sower sowing seed (Mark 4:1-9); and Jesus is sowing the seeds of the kingdom.

The kingdom is of great value.

- In the parables of the treasure hidden in a field and the pearl of great value, characters sell all they have for the sake of the treasure, the great pearl (Matthew 13:44-46).
- They suggest that the kingdom is like that, and that it involves letting go of everything. Shedding attachments, things that bind.
- It involves leaving the land of the dead, not looking back (Luke 9:59-61).

It is like a wedding banquet

- that includes the marginalized and excludes those caught up in life as normal (Luke 14:16-24).
- It is marked by joy that "the lost are being found" (the three parables in Luke 15:3-32, in the context of Luke 15:1-2).

It includes children, who were "nobodies" in that world.

Children: risks, listen, experiment, uncynical.

The Kingdom of God stands in judgment of the elites, who create and shape domination systems in their own interest (Mark 12:1-12).

About a better way **here on earth, now**

Kingdom is here and now

about earthly things

so let's celebrate Christ's kingship of here and now on earth.

Celebrate in worship with the best:

- sights
- sounds
- touch
- smells

God is love

all these are examples of God's creativity and love

Let's not be miserable about this, but celebrate. Celebrate being human. We honour God when we live life to the full, and do all we can to enable others to do likewise.

Celebrate