



Sunday 22nd September 2024

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity (Creationtide)

Gospel Reading

Mark 9.30-37

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³⁰ They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; ³¹ for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' ³² But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

³³ Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' ³⁴ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. ³⁵ He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' ³⁶ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Other Readings: Proverbs 31.10-31 Psalm 1 James 3.13 - 4.3,7-8a

Homily

We are currently in Creationtide. This is the time in the church calendar when we pay particular attention to reflecting on both the joys and the responsibilities of being a part of God's earth and so we reflect on today's readings in light of that.

God has designed the whole of nature to be a huge mechanism that is built on an intricate network of systems; and humans are intricately connected to those systems.

In Psalm 1, we hear that, "he is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season." And again in Proverbs 31 we hear, "she considers a field...with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard." There is no shortage of quotes like this throughout Scripture that indicate how closely we are linked to the natural world.

As God's chosen people, we have been set apart to look after our sister earth and all of the systems that exist within her. For too long now we have got it wrong. Now these systems in nature are wildly out of balance and that's how we have ended up with the current climate emergency. All of the earth is suffering. We're losing plants and wildlife at an alarming rate and our siblings across the world are suffering enormously from the effects of climate change.

So, if we know that we humans have been instrumental in causing the problem, and that it is part of our calling as Christians to respond to the climate crisis, then we can ask ourselves one simple question:

How do we engage with it now?

Isn't it a bit like turning up to help after an earthquake armed with only a dustpan and brush? No! It is not too late and every choice we make to live a more sustainable and environmentally friendly life can build up to make a difference.

Today's Gospel reading provides us with a path. St. Mark's Gospel, relays to us how Jesus foretells the cycle that will lead to his death and resurrection. This brings to mind the whole cycle of Christian life which is echoed throughout the natural world.

What does Jesus say we need to do to become "the greatest?" when our time comes to join him in his glory?

"Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." So we are to become servants, and more than that, Jesus goes on to use a child in his message, which brings to mind a picture of innocence and hope.

The original Greek word used in relation to the child here for "welcome" also means "receive." So, Jesus is urging his listeners to hold close to and to protect that innocence.

In our context of creation and reflecting on what we can do – we can hold close to the most innocent ones who are affected by the climate crisis. Whether it is remembering to recycle our plastic so that it does not cause further harm to innocent marine wildlife or raising money to support those most affected by the droughts and other climate disasters across the world – whatever it is that we do, let's do it with the protection of the innocent in mind and let's remember that we are servants, always!

Alongside taking practical action as we look to protect these most innocent ones, we can reflect on what it means to live with the hope of that small child that Jesus took on to his lap. Hope is a verb – it's a “doing word.” To hope does not only mean to stand still and just think about things. To hope also means to do something – to take action.

As God's chosen people, who live in the hope for a better future for God's planet and her inhabitants, what might we do this week to live more sustainably and to protect the innocent victims of climate change? How might we take on that servant status to become the change in the world that we want to see?

Conversation Questions

1. What new things can you do this coming week to become a more environmentally friendly Christian? Make a list of some of them. #everydayfaith
2. What suggestions can you make to your church leaders to help your church become more eco conscious? Make a list and ask for some time to discuss it with them. #ecochurch
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?

Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

Collect of the day

*Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Gracious God,
you call us to fullness of life:
deliver us from unbelief*

*and banish our anxieties
with the liberating love of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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