



Sunday 27th October 2024

The Last Sunday after Trinity / Bible Sunday

Gospel Reading

John 5.36b-47

³⁶ But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. ³⁷ And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, ³⁸ and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.

³⁹ 'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. ⁴⁰ Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹ I do not accept glory from human beings. ⁴² But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³ I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴ How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? ⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶ If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷ But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?'

Other Readings: Isaiah 55.1-11 Psalm 19.7-14 2 Timothy 3.14 - 4.5

Homily

Today is Bible Sunday, a day when we are especially invited to give thanks for the Bible in the life of the Church and in our own faith journeys. It is a time when we can recommit ourselves once again to read, to mark, to learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures we have been blessed with.

For many of us, the Bible is the main source and bedrock for what we believe and how we come to know most clearly the love of God in Christ Jesus, the Word made flesh.

And the Bible is a fantasticating book. It is full of stories: of adventure, of tragedy, it is full of love and surprises, and it is full of wonder. But the words are not just stories or text on a page. They are the living and active word of God, and they are full of challenges for us in our lives today.

Dr Paula Gooder is a writer and lecturer in Biblical Studies and is currently the Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral in London. Her passion is to ignite people's enthusiasm for reading the Bible today. She says that engaging with Scripture is '*an adventure, a wrestling match and a feast*', and that afterwards, '*you will never be the same again*'.

When we engage with Scripture, when we study them and analyse them, the discussions which arise can be fascinating and illuminating as many of us will have experienced in bible study groups. But it is important that we do not allow the study of the words to become a substitute for allowing the Scriptures to dwell within us and bring us into the presence of the living God.

This means we need to have a relationship with them. In 2 Timothy Chapter 3 :16-17 we are told:

“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.”

In other words, Scripture is a way in which we learn about God and learn to live in the light and knowledge of his love, they help us to fully live the life God intended for us, and they lead us to transformation in our lives and our faith. It is the experience of Christians down the centuries that God really does speak to us through the words of Scripture.

At times of great challenge and uncertainty throughout the history of humankind, the Bible has provided a source of comfort, assurance and hope. Queen Elizabeth II once said in a speech, *“To what greater inspiration and counsel can we turn, than to the imperishable truth to be found in this treasure house, the Bible?”*.

It may feel that hope is in short supply at present as we witness wars and the effects of climate change which result in death and destruction. But even in these difficult times, especially in these difficult times, the Bible gives us hope. It gives us hope because we read in its words that God and his love and his goodness are there for the whole of creation for all eternity.

May we all this Bible Sunday be inspired to continue our *‘adventure, our wrestling match and our feast’* with Scripture and to be changed and grow in Christ likeness.

Earlier this year, the celebrated hymn-writer, the Rt Revd Timothy Dudley-Smith died aged 97. One of his hymns, “Lord, for the years” has often been voted a “favourite contemporary hymn” in various straw polls. Let us conclude with words from one of the verses from that popular hymn which is fitting for this Bible Sunday:

*“Lord, for the word, the word of life which fires us,
speaks to our hearts, and sets our souls ablaze,
teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive your people’s praise.”*

Amen

Conversation Questions

1. What is your most cherished bible verse and why?
2. How has this verse transformed your life and how you interact with others and the world?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

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

*Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.*

(or)

*Merciful God,
teach us to be faithful in change and uncertainty,
that trusting in your word
and obeying your will
we may enter the unfailing joy of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

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