



The Church's prayer for Sunday 3rd October

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Bible Readings and Reflection for Sunday 3rd October

A reading from Hebrews 1.1-4, 2.5-12

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

⁵ It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.

⁶ But there is a place where someone has testified:

"What is mankind that you are mindful of them,
a son of man that you care for him?

⁷ You made them a little lower than the angels;
you crowned them with glory and honour

⁸ and put everything under their feet."

In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. ⁹ But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰ In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹ Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹² He says,

"I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the assembly I will sing your praises."

A Gospel reading from Mark 10:2-16

² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied.



⁴ They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

⁵ “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶ “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸ and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

A reflection from Revd David Newton, Acting Team Rector and Lead Minister for Comberton, Caldecote and Toft

There is in our age – both inside and outside of the church – a renewed interest in pilgrimage. I saw a picture of Archbishop Justin on a new (8 mile!) pilgrimage route in Devon just this week.

The Camino in Spain has become hugely popular, old routes in these isles are being re-established. And, in the church we love (indeed I love) to use the language of pilgrimage.

‘We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow travellers on the road’ (as that lovely hymn puts it). The Gospels are full of the language of journey too. The disciples are called to ‘follow’. They have nowhere to lay their head as they take up the mantle of the itinerant herald alongside Jesus.

Yet there are dangers associated with this relentless emphasis on pilgrimage and restless and ceaseless journey. It can enable us to evade the often boring and mundane responsibilities of love and faithfulness over time – over the long haul – to particular people and places and institutions.

The trope of pilgrimage fits all too easily with a world of zero-hours contracts and abandoned serial commitments. ‘Put a line under it’, ‘time to move on’, ‘that was good for a time’. The emphasis on journey chimes with contemporary lives in which jobs, relationships, and the place we live, are all temporary expedients. Willingness to commit, to take on responsibilities within a local community, to belong for the long term are all waning.

Thankfully this is less true in village communities, and this may well be the reason many of us chose to live in such places. But still – it is clear to all of us I am sure - we live in a world impatient with rootedness, stability and commitment.



In the Gospel narratives Jesus does not only call people to follow. He also calls people to 'go home'. Go home and tell what God has done for you. Go home and re-make relationships, find healing and wholeness in the place you have come from and amongst the people from whom you have run away.

In John's Gospel one of the most common verbs is 'to abide' – to stay, to remain... The Spirit's presence is associated with abiding, with staying put.

In our days of instability, where commitment, rootedness and long-term responsibility are in decline, the church must say something about the value of stability and fidelity. In our days when human desire has been monetized, and advertising is built to seduce us to want things we do not need, the church must say something about love that goes deeper than superficial and whimsical desire.

For being people of love does not mean gratifying our most immediate desires. Instead, it means being faithful to what is right in front us, preferring to mend rather than discard, being aware of how our actions impact the vast web of relationships around us.

All of this is a circuitous way into our readings for today, which are about – in one way or another – long term commitment; of God to us (in Hebrews) and ours to one and another (in Mark's Gospel).

This passage in Mark has of course been used by oppressors, and those with too much power, to keep people in extremely damaging and painful relationships and situations. Those suffering abuse have been told that they should stay put, as "God hates divorce". Many have been sacrificed at the altar of patriarchy.

But the passage is clear about the fragility of our relationships and the inevitability of relational breakdown. Wrongs are done. Relationships end (and indeed sometimes must).

We all have and will again betray love, but the Gospel is one of hope, of new life the other side of pain. It is the good news of forgiveness.

It is also the good news of a stability and faithfulness and commitment from God that will never fade. This is part of what our Hebrews reading points towards. Long ago... God spoke through the prophets, but in these days he speaks through Christ. We are given since of God's commitment to us, to creation, through the long-haul.

We are made brothers and sisters with Christ, adopted into the family... given a kinship which can never be severed. Christ who created the world now sustains us in it – he is the ultimate sign of fidelity to a faithless world. His commitment took him to the cross and through it into new life.

The fidelity of God never waivers through our unfaithfulness. It is that fidelity which gives hope, new life, forgiveness when we betray love. It is that fidelity which gives us the resources to try again, and again, and again... that we might learn what it is to be a people of faithfulness, stability and commitment in a world that shuns such things for the ecstasy of the single moment.



Such faithfulness is difficult, but it is also essential to our humanity.

For the heart of each of us is not some autonomous and independent centre; it is not some deep inner self that we find within. The heart of each of us is found in our relationships, in those bonds of love that make us and shape us. The core of our being is found in those connections to other people, in the responsibilities we have to love those right in front of us.

We need each other. We are made who we are through each other.

The path to human flourishing is not found by searching for the ethereal and fleeting grand “experience”. It is not found in the constant search for newness. Instead, it is found in the ordinary and mundane attachments we have to one another, in the far less exciting, but far more wonderful bonds of fidelity.

Amen.