

**St Columba's, Grantown; St John's Rothiemurchus**  
**Readings and Reflection Trinity 19 2021** *10th Oct*

Collect : O Lord, in your mercy, grant to your people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Old Testament Reading : Amos 5 vv 6,7,10-15

Seek the LORD and live, or he will sweep through the tribes of Joseph like a fire; it will devour them, and Bethel will have no one to quench it.

<sup>7</sup> There are those who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground.

<sup>10</sup> There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court

and detest the one who tells the truth.

<sup>11</sup> You levy a straw tax on the poor and impose a tax on their grain.

Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.

<sup>12</sup> For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins.

There are those who oppress the innocent and take bribes

and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore the prudent keep quiet in such times, for the times are evil.

<sup>14</sup> Seek good, not evil, that you may live.

Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is.

<sup>15</sup> Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts.

Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Psalm 90 vv12ff

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

<sup>13</sup> Relent, LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.

<sup>14</sup> Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,

that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

<sup>15</sup> Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,

for as many years as we have seen trouble.

<sup>16</sup> May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendour to their children.

<sup>17</sup> May the favour of the Lord our God rest on us;

establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.

New Testament Reading : Hebrews 4 vv12ff

The word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son

of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Song of our true nature (Julian of Norwich)

**Nature and grace are of one accord, for God is one in love, in nature and in grace.**

1. Christ revealed our frailty and our falling, our trespasses and our humiliations
2. Christ also revealed his blessed power, his blessed wisdom and love.
3. He protects us as tenderly and as sweetly when we are in greatest need; he raises us in spirit and turns everything to glory and joy without ending
4. God is the ground and the substance, the very essence of nature; God is the true father and mother of natures.
5. We are all bound to God by nature, and we are all bound to God by grace.
6. And this grace is for all the world, because it is our precious mother, Christ
7. For this fair nature was prepared by Christ for the honour and nobility of all, and for the joy and bliss of salvation.

**Nature and grace are of one accord, for God is one in love, in nature and in grace**

Gospel : Mark 10. vv17-31 The Rich and the Kingdom of God

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “*Good teacher,*” he asked, “*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*”

<sup>18</sup> “*Why do you call me good?*” Jesus answered. “*No one is good—except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother’*”.

<sup>20</sup> “*Teacher,*” he declared, “*all these I have kept since I was a boy.*”

<sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. “*One thing you lack,*” he said. “*Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.*”

<sup>22</sup> At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!*”

<sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “*Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.*”

<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “*Who then can be saved?*”

<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, “*With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.*”

<sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, “*We have left everything to follow you!*”

<sup>29</sup> “*Truly I tell you, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children & fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*”

## Reflection :

As we get older it is increasingly difficult to feel at home with the ebullient enthusiasm of youth. Jesus, though only 30 at the time, found the young man who ran up to him, ran, and knelt down before him, slightly embarrassing. A man who had done well for himself, young according to Matthew (19.22), a ruler according to Luke (18.18). Who had it seems been trying to find meaning in life by being respectable - obeying the commandments. For an orthodox Jew there would have been no need to ask, *'What must I do to inherit eternal life?'* Because the answer was in their tradition - eternal life was for anyone who obeyed the law. This young man had been respectable - he had obeyed the law. *Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.* All negatives except the last which is limited to the family - his respectable family. *'I have never in my life done anyone any harm.'*

But he was looking for something more, something authentic, exciting; and maybe Jesus held a clue. In his enthusiasm he ran up to Jesus and knelt down on the ground.

Jesus warmed to him, 'loved him' it says. *"No flattery"* answered Jesus - *'keep that for God!'* At the risk of quelling his enthusiasm, Jesus urged him to stop and think - count the consequences of what he was saying : *"I have never in my life done anyone any harm."*

OK; good. But the real question is, *'When in your life have you done people any good?!'*

Amos warned Israel to avoid negatives: *'You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain; you oppress the righteous and ... deprive the poor of justice in the courts'.*

But it's not just about avoiding negatives; it's about taking on positives?

*"Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor. Then come, follow me!"*

With all your possessions, with all your wealth, what positive good you could have done to others! And still could!

Like the sheep and goats saying in Matthew 25 : The king will say to those on his left :

*"Depart from me ... for I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. I was a stranger and you did not invite me in...."* They will answer, *'Lord when did we see you hungry or thirsty, or a stranger ... and did not help you?'*  
*"I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for the least of these, you did not do for me."*

Jesus is saying to this young ruler, as he says to us : 'Get out of this moral respectability.

Stop looking at goodness as not doing things. Take yourself, take all you possess, and spend

yourself and all you possess on others. Then you will find happiness and eternity.'

Our question : 'What must I do ....'?

Jesus' answer : 'Follow me and you will find out!'

Jesus then turned to his disciples and shocked them : "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. Not surprising - the Jewish faith, or at least its popular versions, believed that prosperity was a sign of God's favour, and that if a man was rich and prosperous, then God must have honoured and blessed him.

Psalm 37 : 'I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken, or their children begging bread... The Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones.'

The more prosperous a man was, the more assured he would be of entry into the kingdom.

But Jesus is saying how difficult it is. He offers that wonderful example from their own world - laughable for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. His hearers would also realise that there is one of the gates of the old city of Jerusalem, the Gate of the Needle - which is very small, low and narrow. A baby camel could just get through it, but not if it were loaded down with packages and possessions,.

Jesus is not saying, and I hope that today the Christian church is not saying, that wealth is evil in itself. The old song : 'Money is the root of all evil', got it wrong for the sake of metre. 'The love of money is the root of all evil.' Wealth is evil like so many things in life when it becomes an end in itself, a 'raison d'etre'.

We've got to take the bags of silk and gold and spices off our camel before it can get through the gate of the needle's eye.

We don't need them – others might, though. Tony

Prayer : Holy and blessed God,  
you have fed us on the your Word and filled us with you Holy Spirit,  
may we honour you, not only with our lips but in lives dedicated to the service  
of Jesus Christ our Lord Amen

Blessing : May we follow Jesus in the ways of the Lord, always knowing and doing what is right and good; and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be within us and among us, now and always Amen