



**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020**

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

**The Beacon Parishes Mission Community of Ipplepen with Torbryan,  
Denbury, Broadhempston and Woodland**

**FIRST READING**

**Genesis 18.1-15**

**A Son Promised to Abraham and Sarah**

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, 'Where is your wife Sarah?' And he said, 'There, in the tent.' Then one said, 'I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.' And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' The LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, "Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?" Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, 'I did not laugh'; for she was afraid. He said, 'Oh yes, you did laugh.'

**PSALM**

**Psalms 116.1, 10-17**

**Thanksgiving for Recovery from Illness**

I love the LORD, because he has heard  
my voice and my supplications.  
I kept my faith, even when I said,  
'I am greatly afflicted';  
I said in my consternation,  
'Everyone is a liar.'

What shall I return to the LORD  
for all his bounty to me?  
I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call on the name of the LORD,  
I will pay my vows to the LORD  
in the presence of all his people.  
Precious in the sight of the LORD  
is the death of his faithful ones.  
O LORD, I am your servant;  
I am your servant, the child of your serving-maid.  
You have loosed my bonds.  
I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice  
and call on the name of the LORD.

## **SECOND READING**

### **Romans 5.1-8**

#### **Results of Justification**

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

## **GOSPEL**

### **Matthew 9.35-10.23**

#### **The Harvest Is Great, the Labourers Few**

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.'

#### **The Twelve Apostles**

Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax-collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

#### **The Mission of the Twelve**

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim the good news, "The kingdom of heaven has come near." Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food. Whatever town

or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town.

### Coming Persecutions

'See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

## Reflection for the First Sunday after Trinity by Steve Sheldon

### COMPASSION

*'In fact, for this reason I was born, for this I came into the world: to testify to the truth.'* [John 18:37]  
And, indeed, what is truth?

*'The truths of religion are accessible only when you are prepared to get rid of the selfishness, greed and self-preoccupation that are engrained in our thoughts and behaviour, but are also the source of so much of our pain.'*

Karen Armstrong [The Case for God](#)

*'The desire to cultivate a sense of the transcendent may be the defining human characteristic.'*  
Karen Armstrong, [The Case for God](#)

To cultivate a *'sense of the transcendent'*, meaning to actively seek out the Kingdom of God, is the most basic of human desires, that lifts us beyond the world of mere animal instincts. We are born, we have been made, we are so constituted, to search for God. Religion is not an optional extra; it is part of what makes us human. But we are able to do this only by stepping outside ourselves, outside our own preferences, convictions and prejudices. Karen tells us that seeking out the Kingdom of God is done through the *'habitual practice of **compassion** and the Golden Rule all day and every day.'*

The central teaching in the synagogues at the time of Jesus was the Golden Rule: *'What is hateful to yourself, do **not** to your fellow man. That is the whole of the Torah and the remainder is but commentary.'* The chief principle of the Law in the first century was *'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'* Compassion was the key to understanding all scripture. This teaching wasn't original to Jesus, but it was the Truth to which he came into the world to bear witness. Compassion is the central focus of Jesus' teaching and is also the key to seeking out the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, *'Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate'* [Luke 6:36]

In our Old Testament reading from Genesis *'God appears to Abraham in the guise of a traveller. Standing by the entrance of his tent in the hottest part of the afternoon, Abraham sees three men approaching. Strangers were dangerous people, but Abraham ran out to meet them, bowed before them as if they were kings, brought them into his camp and gave them an elaborate meal. Without any great fanfare it transpires in the course of the ensuing conversation that one of these visitors is God. Abraham's act of compassion has led to a divine encounter.'*

Actively reaching out to others is part of how we reach out to God, part of our seeking the Kingdom of God.

*'Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to him who knocks... Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the meaning of the Law of Moses and of the teachings of the prophets.'* [Matt 7:7-8, 12] Here Jesus clearly links the Golden Rule with the search for God.

In today's gospel when Jesus saw all the people coming to see him "he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless."

And so Jesus began the first stages of his training for those that would follow him. He sent the twelve out to proclaim the good news and be compassionate by being actively of service to those they met.

Like Paul told the church in Philippi, *'Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. Look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.'* [Phil 2:3-4]

We no longer have the physical Jesus here with us in the flesh. But we can find him, be of the same mind as him, by reaching out to others and seeing Jesus in them. We mistakenly in the past tried to be Church by creating an island, a fortress with a drawbridge, a pleasant enclosed garden into which we dragged people away from the world, which is not what Jesus did. Jesus went out into the world, but was not overcome by it, but instead put into motion a way to transform the world into a better place. Jesus is still out there in the world if we are willing to seek and find.

To seek the Kingdom means to be like Paul in Corinth and be both honoured and disgraced; insulted and praised; treated as liars while speaking the truth; as though dead, but alive; saddened yet always glad; seemingly poor; yet making many people rich; seeming to have nothing, yet having everything. [2 Cor 6:8-10]

Faith in Jesus is about trust, commitment and active engagement. Jesus wasn't looking for belief in his divinity, he asked the disciples to keep quiet about that. He wanted his disciples to be committed, to engage in his mission to live the Kingdom of God in their daily lives. To believe in Jesus is to be actively committed to Compassion. The word 'believe' is derived from the German word 'belieben': to love. To believe in Jesus is to be loyal and bound in duty to him. To say 'I believe in God' really means: 'I give my heart, my loyalty, my commitment to God in action and practical living.'

Few of us are called to literally be active Evangelists. But we are all called to evangelising by spreading the Good News through our habitual practice of Compassion and the Golden Rule all day and every day. We do this because it is our duty to God to do so.

The earliest Church wasn't an intellectual belief system, but a style of relationship to the world which was primarily marked by 'doing' things. They didn't opt out of the world, but brought salt and yeast and bread and life. It's like Isaiah's vision: *'Prepare in the wilderness a Way for the Lord!'* [40:3] Or like what the prophet Hosea wrote: *'Plough new ground for yourselves, plant righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, for it is time to seek the Lord who will come and pour out blessings upon you.'* Plough, plant, reap; seek: blessing.

We need to look at our contemporary world's values and themes and compare and contrast them with what our faith and religion teaches us. This means we need to understand what the difference is between The World and the Kingdom of God. However! we are living in and nurtured by the same culture as everyone else. We cannot separate ourselves from our personal perceptions and opinions of the world. There is no us or them. The culture that nurtured them is the one that has nurtured us. There is no uniform Christian or Kingdom political, economic, social standard to be found. Each of us brings with us a bias toward liberal or conservative values, ethics, understandings of the faith. If I was to ask each of you to itemise a list of everything that's Wrong with the World Today, our lists would overlap in places, but would also widely disagree in others.

The point of being a Compassionate person, being of loving service to our neighbours is to leave behind our personal perceptions of things, our biases and convictions. What each of us individually thinks is *Wrong with the World* is not important when we are being of service to someone in need.

Jesus told his disciples that he wanted them to be part of a community where each of us is the servant of the other, daily practicing Compassion and the Golden Rule, stepping outside ourselves in service. [Matt 20:26-28]

Sometimes we can best step outside ourselves, empathise, feel with and be with others, by simply being silent and listening to other people's stories. We are living in a narcissistic, self-centred world and telling someone about our story can go over their head and be lost. We must listen first because Jesus tells us, *'What gives life is God's Spirit; man's power is of no use at all.'* [John 6:63] We cannot 'fix' anyone. It is the Spirit that produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. Not us. [Gal 5:22] Paul continues, *'Let the Spirit direct your lives, and you will not satisfy the desires of nature.'* [Gal 5:16] Food, shelter, procreation, these are the in-built urges of our natural being for our survival. But what makes us human is the ability to rise above our natural desires and consider the needs of others before our own; to have compassion. But it is a lot harder to do that, to resist the atavistic instincts without Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Stepping outside ourselves and letting the Spirit do the work, we can more easily leave our own self behind.

Ultimately it is the Peace of God which passes all understanding. Words, words, words, words, words. In the end, words become useless. They chain us down. We wrangle over them to our ruin. [2 Tim 2:9, 14] The Peace of God surpasses all reason and understanding and is beyond the limitation of our words. The Peace of God which drives out all fear will come only when we've run out of words, and we hand things over to Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the utterly transcendent Father: because Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God isn't a physical thing to be found but is something within us, and there are no words for that. [Luke 17:20-21]

When God resurrected Jesus he shattered all known boundaries, released us from the fear of death, and thereby encourages us to **live in the present** and transform the world through Compassion while striving at all times for the Kingdom. The Kingdom is not cause & effect [like magic], is not reward and punishment [like human legal systems], it's not an intellectual, rational mathematical puzzle or exercise to be solved [like science]. It's real, it's here and it's now and Now is where we need to be of loving compassionate service.

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living he declared your love, gave us grace and opened the gate of glory.

May we, the Body of Christ, live his risen life;  
we who have been made alive in him, bring that life to others;  
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; and may the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. Amen.

## **GOD MADE LAUGHTER**

By John L. Bell & Graham Maule  
From the Iona Community 1988

### **IN THE BEGINNING GOD MADE LAUGHTER**

He made it for Adam,  
when the winter came and the leaves started to wither;

He made it for Eve,  
when her children asked where their mum came from;

He made it for Methusaleh,  
when the time came to blowout the candles on his birthday cake;

He made it for Mrs Noah,  
when her husband first mentioned his amphibious zoo;

He made it for Abraham,  
when a year off a hundred he was asked to walk the world

He made it for Sarah,  
when she eavesdropped on an angel and giggled until she was pregnant;

He made it for Moses,  
when the sheep raised their heads in confusion at his stutter;

He made it for Miriam,  
when she danced on dry land as a sign of liberation;

He made it for wee David,  
when Saul offered to make him the youngest lance corporal;

He made it for big Goliath,  
when he first glimpsed the cause of impending rigor mortis

God made laughter for himself  
when his children on earth take themselves too seriously;

And he gave it to Jesus  
to share with his friends,  
to use in his stories,  
to give praise to young children,  
to bring to the sad.

So, we dare not, in our wisdom, doubt that God inhabits humour,  
nor condemn him to be dour like some bankrupt undertaker.

From his Spirit issues joy,  
and that fruit is for our healing.