

Santiago de Compostela Anglican Chaplaincy

Sunday 14th June 2020

Readings for today: Psalm 116:1, 10-17; Exodus 19:2-8; Rom 5:1-8; Matt 9:35-10:8

Once again we have had a turbulent week of news regarding the easing of lockdown restrictions, and I suspect that many of you, like me, have felt some turbulent reactions to the news. I don't know whether to be filled with joy or dread at the idea of pilgrims once more making their way to Santiago. My prayers are with all who walk and all who stay behind, with all who open their doors and with those who don't; I pray a blessing on all your journeys, the spiritual ones, the physical ones, the ones embarked on and the ones that are delayed. Buen Camino to you all.



From the cloister, Sto Domingo de Silos

Let us begin with a prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ:

May he give us all the courage that we need
to go the way he shepherds us.

That when he calls,
we may go unfrightened.

If he bids us come to him across the waters,
that unfrightened we may go.

And if he bids us climb the hill,
may we not notice that it is a hill,
mindful only of the happiness of his company.

He made us for himself,
that we should travel with him
and see him at the last
in his unveiled beauty
in the abiding city where

he is light
and happiness
and endless home.

Amen.



We read the psalm for today as a prayer for all who have recovered from illness recently, particularly those who have suffered from and overcome the Coronavirus.

Psalm 116:1, 10-17

Thanksgiving for Recovery from Illness

¹ I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications

¹⁰ I kept my faith, even when I said,
'I am greatly afflicted';

¹¹ I said in my consternation,
'Everyone is a liar.'

¹² What shall I return to the Lord
for all his bounty to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,

¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.

¹⁵ Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his faithful ones.

¹⁶ O Lord, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your serving-maid.
You have loosed my bonds.

¹⁷ I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the Lord.



Reflection on Matthew 9:35-10:8

I am very tempted, on reading the scripture for this week, to stay focused on the theme of the plentiful harvest and the call for labourers: how true it is that there are vast numbers of people seeking God, and not so many who are prepared to devote their lives to encouraging others in faith both by example and by speaking about the good news of the Gospel.

But how can I, in the light of our current circumstances of living through a global pandemic that has already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, ignore the passages which tell us that Jesus sent his disciples out to cure the sick and raise the dead? It is passages such as these that have turned some away from faith, when prayers for healing appear to go unanswered.

I don't deny that healing miracles occur; my own personal experience of a friend whose sudden and complete healing from an aggressive cancer following a time of prayer with laying on of hands and calling on the Holy Spirit to intervene and save him gives me immense hope for all who are prayed for in this way.

I also accept that God's will does not always match our own, and it is better not to try to know the mind of God or see what the future would bring if only things were different and all the people we pray for are miraculously cured every time. Healing has many forms; it's not only about a cure. Better to pray for God's healing, in God's way, and to pray for comfort, and acceptance in the knowledge of the deep and universal love of God.

All that said, I don't think that Jesus was necessarily simply talking about physical sickness. The recent world-wide protests following the appalling murder of George Floyd in Minnesota have re-ignited conversations around institutional and unconscious racism. These have been likened to another kind of pandemic; a sickness in our societies which is deep seated and passed on from generation to generation, often unwittingly, but passed on nonetheless. This kind of sickness, left unchecked, causes untold damage to countless people throughout the world.

Who would have thought, after the horrors wrought by the Nazi regime in the 1940's, that anti-Semitism would still, like an infectious disease, blight the lives of Jewish people today, or that genocide would still happen anywhere in the world. Who would have thought, with all our intelligence and all our means, that we as a human race are unable to protect our own from ourselves?

We heard in the reading from Matthew's Gospel that 'when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.'

Harassed and helpless: those who are discriminated against in our societies have long felt harassed and helpless. Now, there are millions more feeling harassed and helpless; those stuck in isolation for fear of catching or of transmitting the virus; those who go to work to nurse and treat the sick and the vulnerable, knowing that they put themselves at risk in doing so; those trying to balance the giving out of advice on how to contain the virus' spread with the longing for freedom felt by us all.

If only they all had someone to turn to who could offer them comfort and guidance and the hope of a better future...

I am certain that Jesus looks upon the harassed and helpless people of today's world with compassion; they too are like sheep without a shepherd. And he continuously commands us, his disciples: Go, tell people about me. Cast out wickedness, cure every sickness. Raise the (spiritually) dead, that they may have eternal life.

Now, more than ever, disciples of Jesus everywhere must hear and heed his words.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, now might be the time for some careful self-examination. Jesus sent his disciples initially not to those who had no faith in God, but to fellow Israelites. The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few.

Perhaps now is a good time for each of us to ask ourselves: Do I recognise Jesus Christ as my shepherd?

If our answer is yes, we will already be heeding his call. We will already be talking to our friends and neighbours about our faith and the hope found in the Gospel message. We will already be doing all we are able to cast out sickness from the world, which includes standing up for justice and equality and peace (as well as adhering to all the guidelines for Covid-19 containment!).

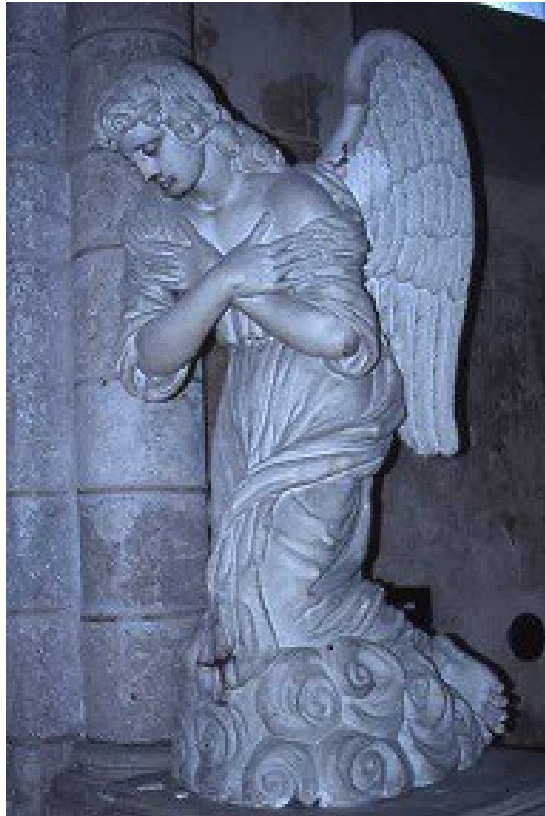
If we are not doing these things, might we be among the harassed and helpless, who don't recognise their shepherd's voice? If we dare to call ourselves disciples of Christ, then we must also dare to act as disciples of Christ. He calls us to action. Some will protest, others will pick up a pen, lobby governments, sign petitions, pray.

It seems I have focussed on the theme of the harvest and the labourers after all! But in becoming labourers and acting out our discipleship in the way that we have been called to do, not only will we be helping with the harvest and bringing others to faith, we will also be instrumental in casting out some of the malaise of injustice and inequality in our world.

Collect for the first Sunday after Trinity

O God,
The strength of all those who put their trust in you,

Mercifully accept our prayers
And, because through the weakness
Of our moral nature
We can do no good thing without you,
Grant us the help of your grace,
That in the keeping of your commandments
We may please you both in will and deed;
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 forever. Amen.



Statue in the church at Gallardon, 25km before Chartres

Prayers

Lord, make us to walk in your way:
Where there is love and wisdom,
there is neither fear nor ignorance;
where there is patience and humility
there is neither anger nor annoyance;
where there is poverty and joy,
there is neither greed nor avarice;
where there is peace and contemplation,

there is neither care nor restlessness;
where there is the fear of God to guard the dwelling,
there no enemy can enter;
where there is mercy and prudence,
there is neither excess nor harshness;
this we know through your Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Lord, our Father,

As we remember all those who have suffered and died from contagious disease, we bring before you now all those who throughout the world are affected, directly or indirectly, by the coronavirus pandemic and other epidemic diseases.

We pray for covid-19 sufferers, for those with leprosy, and others with diseases whose symptoms include alienation and humiliation. Comfort and sustain the suffering, the dying, and the sick, and help others, including ourselves, to act with compassion at all times, and to bring your light and your love to all those who suffer, that they may come to know you and your gift of eternal life when their suffering on this earth is done.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer



The Pyrennees near Col de Somport

God of compassion,
Have mercy upon our world
In this time of fear and confusion:
We bring before you those who are suffering
And those who tend to their needs;
May those in isolation know your comfort and your company
And may neighbours show your love
In works of care, kindness and prayer;
We pray for the lost and the lonely
The fearful, the forgotten, the forlorn;
We pray for health care workers and medics
And all engaged in scientific research
And we pray too for those upon whose shoulders
The yoke of leadership rests,
That in their conversation and communication
Your still small voice may be heard;
We ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit,
Through the One who stretched out his hands
To bless and to heal
Even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of truth, help us to keep your law of love
And to walk in ways of wisdom,
That we may find true life

In Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.



A Closing Prayer and Blessing

St James, Apostle
Chosen among the first
You were the first to drink
The Cup of the Master
And you are the great protector of pilgrims;
Make us strong in faith
And happy in hope
On our pilgrim journey
Following the path of Christian life
And sustain us so that
We may finally reach the glory of God the Father
Amen

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your cheeks.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.
And may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you,
with those whom you love, and for whom you pray, this day and always.
Amen.

