

SERMON

Trinity Sunday, 7th June 2020

The Archbishop of York

Welcome to the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Garden and Orchard, here at Bishopthorpe Palace. Welcome!

May I speak in the Name of the Son, In the Power of the Holy Spirit, To the Glory of God the Father. Amen

I begin my reflection on the four passages of Scripture appointed for this Trinity Sunday with a story. Not about anyone else but me.

I was ten years old when I responded to Jesus Christ's invitation to become his friend and to discover his plan for my present, and my future. To receive life in all its fullness, in the present and to know the forgiveness of past sins, to own my past but not be enslaved by it and to begin writing my future in hope.

Sixty-one years on, I truly know I was lovingly invited into God's glorious community of love, rooted in faithfulness and friendliness. And throughout my life I have found God in these experiences:

I found union with God, encountering him as the Loving Father, as the Redeeming Son and as the Energising Holy Spirit, ever ready to answer my call as the helper and strengthener.

Not three gods, but One God, present to me in three persons.

I found myself trusting in God with a new lifestyle, a life of obedience to the pattern demonstrated by Jesus of Nazareth who lived it out in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I found myself united with other followers of Jesus Christ because I was, they were, we are, united with the Father, with the Son, and with the Holy Spirit. United in our witness and life together as disciples of Jesus Christ, bound up with the worship of One God in three persons.

As we heard in the beautiful blessings at the end of our Reading from St Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 13: 14), we live together as followers of Jesus Christ because of the Grace, the unmerited favour, of the Son; the Love of the Father and the Fellowship, the Shared Life, we have with the Holy Spirit.

Believe you me, faith, trust, is not a crutch to lean on. It is the very act of leaning. Faith is nothing better than sanctified common sense. It is the most common-sense thing in the world to trust in the incomparable power and majesty of God, in the infinite, unchanging love, and infallible truth of God eloquently portrayed by Prophet Isaiah in our Reading.

To trust anywhere else needs a great deal of justification. But to trust in God needs no apology. For as Gerald Manley Hopkins put it, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God" (Poems and Prose, Penguin Classics, 1985).

No entity in heaven or earth compares to God, and, therefore, none can prevent his justice and mercy to us. The God who created the earth and made the heavens is mightier than the gods we are tempted to worship, money, power, status, ethnic origin, competitive sport. Those gods, after all, are created, not creators.

And the wonder of it, as Psalm 8 sings majestically, God's Name, character, majesty and power is glorious throughout the world and yet mortal humankind was made little less than divine (Elohim) and adorned with glory and majesty, depicting humankind as God-like as in Genesis Chapter 1 (verses 26-30).

The wonder is that we are loved with a love that is stronger than death by the One who went to hell and back – even Jesus Christ. "Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to him", and he has promised us his power and presence, to the end of time.

Filled with this love and power he sends us out to go and make all nations his friends and learners. He calls us to stand at the intersection where God's love and human need meet. Telling others that we are the hungry and the thirsty ones, who have been led to the bread of life and the living water, welling up to eternity.

He also sends us out to become friends of the weak and those who are marginalised. Jesus Christ is always at the centre, and at the same time encompasses all - present on the circumference with all those who are on the margins.

This awesome God has touched and healed and is healing my wounds by his greatest miracle in me: His constant forgiveness. He has taught me to welcome the person within me who is weak and poor in spirit.

In Matthew 25, Jesus bids us to welcome him in the poor, the sick, the hungry, the homeless, the naked, the prisoner and the stranger. As his followers, this we must all do implicitly, and in a very small way I have given it my best shot.

But, reflecting on my sixty-one years as a follower of Jesus Christ, I have tended to shy away from recognising Jesus Christ in my own poverty of spirit. I have stood alongside those who are in need without at the same time acknowledging the poor and prisoner inside me. I now know it is both/and.

I have learnt , with wonder, to see Jesus Christ in my own poverty, hunger and thirst for meaning and in my deepest needs; as well as all that is “strange” inside me.

The Blessed and Glorious Trinity is beseeching me, beseeching you, to welcome all this and not deny their existence in me, in you, and to accept that they are there. Because on the very ground of our defeat is where we meet the Healer who bears the marks of crucifixion in his body. Discovering the presence of God in these very places of weakness is liberating!

God in Jesus Christ calls us to enter into the pain, the mystery of the Cross and dereliction, forsakenness. Leading us to a compassion like his, so that even in the midst of searing pain, we can focus our eyes on others and their pain and be steadfast in love and care for them.

As we grow in trust, we learn to wait in hope and open our lives to the tender love of God and hear him in the lament of his world.

God, the Holy Spirit, like a parent to their child, is a comforter to each one of us. He interprets our deepest unuttered cry and draws us out of our inner prison of fear. God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is compassionate and gentle of heart. Therefore, we will not be afraid to open our wounded hearts to him. Let us go to him for wholeness and healing as we put our trust in him. Come! Come! I will go with you.

Amen.