



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 10 October 2021 – Trinity 19
Readings: Hebrews 4: 12-end St Mark 10: 17-31
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Safeguarding? What's in a name?

I'm always ready to be proved wrong, but I don't recall reading the term 'Safeguarding', in our version of the Bible: yet Jesus' ministry and mission was all about safeguarding peoples' hearts, minds and spirits. How did he do it? He started with the basics and built up from there. Take, for instance, in Mark's Gospel, his conversation, with the man who wanted to know how he might inherit eternal life. Jesus gives him a résumé of the ten commandments and infers these should be the man's benchmarks both of spiritual direction and personal, moral conduct. The man assures Jesus that he has adhered scrupulously to the commandments all his life.

Digging deeper

Jesus probes further suggesting that he lacks one quality, he needs to divest himself of his wealth, give it to the poor then, follow him, as that would be the way to eternal life. This seems a harsh requirement but Jesus is not aiming to denigrate him, on the contrary, for he looks at the man with loving kindness truly seeing the individual within. What Jesus is trying to do is to help the man discern where true priorities lie: to see himself, as Jesus looking through to his heart and mind. Jesus sees an ardent individual who is outwardly compliant with the religious codes of conduct but inwardly, there are conflicts of interest vying for his attention, particularly, his wealth, which distracts him from putting his faith into action.

Conflicts of Interest

We too face similar challenges with our faith versus daily living and where our priorities lie. It might not be wealth, it could be family commitments, or a favourite pastime and all too quickly prayer time and corporate worship may get side-lined. Yet daily prayer and Church are vital safeguards, for what affects our souls, will direct our actions. We cannot keep ourselves safeguarded from temptation, if we are not receiving from the source of our faith. With so many conflicts assaulting our senses, what would Jesus see if he looked lovingly into the hearts and minds of each one of us today?

Nothing to boast about

Potentially, down the decades, the fault of the church with Safeguarding has been the lack of looking loving and truly seeing the individual, too caught up with administration, service preparation and church politics. As we know, ineffective practices caused safeguarding

issues to go undetected or, unresolved adding corporate abuse to that which the victims had already endured. Collectively, we are appalled, however, in our lovely island and friendly church those problems might seem distant. Yet we all know vulnerable people: the ill, the bereaved, the physically and mentally challenged and Jesus' precious little lambs, the children. After all, at different times and seasons of our lives, we too will be or, will have been, those vulnerable people. To safeguard all within the church is truly a case of 'Do as you would be done by' or, to precis Jesus' commandments that I read earlier: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself." What a holy world it would be if humanity was scrupulous in adhering to Christ's command.

Joint and several responsibility

Thanks to Annie, our church has a safeguarding officer, however, the responsibility is not hers alone. It is our joint and several responsibility to be aware; to be attentive and, to act appropriately if we have qualms about something we have observed within our church and report it. Timeliness and proportionality are vital, for it is grieving that some priests have been hounded to their deaths or, close to it, by false accusations and the Church's dilatory actions. The Church is actively seeking to redress past failings and have the humility to see itself as Jesus and realise that unlike Jesus who is faultless, it can be wrong.

Positive take-aways

What a challenging and salutary sermon! Where are the positives that I promised you at the start of the service? Despite, the stern warnings that we will be required to render to God an account of our actions, Hebrews gives us a positive. Thankfully, by God's mercy and grace through Jesus, having experienced our own humanity, understands our weaknesses. Though assaulted continually by the temptations we face, yet fearlessly Jesus persevered faultlessly. Because of his conquest over sin, Hebrews urges us to stand with boldness before God's throne of mercy and grace and ask for help in our times of need, to be our support when putting our faith into action.

Boldness wins

How bold do we feel? Does our faith falter because we make Jesus frail? The greatest positive, as shown by Jesus, is that God's love is greater than our greatest fears and greatest failings. Each day in prayer and every time we come here to worship, let us replenish ourselves with God's loving strength and act by it, so that our church continues to be a place of scared space where all are safe within it. Amen.