



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**2nd Sunday before Advent – Sermon for 10.00am 15 November 2020**  
**Bible Readings: Zephaniah 1 7, 12-end & St Matthew 25: 14-30**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

***'Who do you think you are?'***

Do you enjoy watching the TV series *'Who do you think you are?'* Sometimes, the celebrity finds the family background has been very challenging and at other times they discover a happy unexpected turn of events. In the readings today, we might have a fair grasp of who St Matthew was – the tax collector who Jesus called to follow him - but who do you think Zephaniah was? He lived during the reign of King Josiah about 600 years before Christ when Judah was a vassal state of Assyria. To be a prophet in his day meant delivering God's message face-to-face: no phone, TV or Internet to hide behind. The message was often uncomfortable hearing or why the need in the first place? In Zephaniah's case, his great-great-grandfather was an Ethiopian, which race is known for its tallness of stature: God always chooses his messengers to be the right person to get noticed. Zephaniah, recognised that he proclaimed a message with divine authority so he begins by commanding silence before God, for the Day of the Lord is at hand.

**Is our silence golden?**

To be really silent, it's necessary to stop all activity. What over-activity had troubled God? It seems the Israelites were spending excessive energy on wealth creation expanding their business interests and building bigger and better homes. None of these things is necessarily wrong: to want to make a better life for ourselves using the skills we are given but there comes a point when enough is enough. They had placed their acquisition of material things before devotion to God thereby breaking the 1st commandment "You shall have no other God's before me". Instead they were bowing down to wealth, wood and stone. It's not the act of acquisition that was at fault, but the implications. In mimicking the Assyrians, the Israelites had lost their Jewish identity and worse had lost their way with God, who had given them the Promised Land. Zephaniah prophesies dire consequences for those who flout God's way, which will not only affect those who are culpable but the fallout will also capture those who had been faithful.

**Faithful or feckless?**

Now let's review Jesus' parable of the three slaves who were entrusted to be stewards of their Lord's capital. Like all of Jesus' parables the seemingly obvious story has a deeper moral and spiritual message. Taking the obvious first, the two industrious stewards mimicked their master's attributes and made more capital in proportion to their skill. The third steward, fears failure prevaricating to the point of inertia not even trying to trade or invest the capital. Jesus' message is for those who

should know better, particularly the Pharisees who ought to have been guiding their flock into ways of righteousness. They who had been given so much of God's capital in the Law and the Prophets, instead block investment. They neither trade to put God's love into action or invest in their own spiritual development but are over-active devising an agenda of their own. The sting of this parable comes right at the end. Jesus speaks of "One being thrown into outer darkness where there will be weeping." That could be the third steward's punishment but the next verse says "When the Son of Man comes ..." this is the Day of the Lord by any other name – this is the Day of Judgement for us all. Jesus gives the Pharisees another chance to be silent and know God: instead, he was rejected by those he came to save.

### **Who do we think we are?**

Now it's time to ask 'Who do we think we are?' We call ourselves Christians and invest of our time coming to church both on Sunday and for fund-raising events joining together before God in community. Intrinsically good activities but what is the implication of this investment of our time, does it pay dividends? Are we over-active working away at our own agenda thereby, inadvertently getting our priorities in the wrong order? Does our busyness deflect from our love of God and love of each other? Do we invest in our spiritual welfare by reading our bibles and praying? Are we listening to what God is asking us to do or, have we lost our way with him? In fact, 'Who do we think God is?'

### **Who do we think God is?**

Is God the ruthless judge who slaughters all irrespective of our faltering efforts to serve him? God knows we don't always get things right: it's not our failings that troubles him it's our not trying. So, how can we tune in to God's will? If we allow God's silence to enter our souls, we will realise it is the place to face our fears and not hide from them. God's stillness is gentle and loving: to be ourselves in his presence is alright. He will help us to reset our priorities, lovingly transforming us into the likeness of his Son if we will allow him to. God does not seek to condemn the world; his will is that the world might be saved through his Son. With the season of Advent approaching, let our priority be spiritual preparation before the materialistic. Let's prepare ourselves once more for the wonder of the Christ-child. Let's 'be still' in God's presence and let go of our busyness and let God direct us.

### **Who does God want us to be?**

Investing more of our time silently with God pays spiritual dividends, as it enables us to listen to what he is saying to us and, then, we will know who he wants us to be.

**Amen.**