



Sunday, 22 September 2019 – Trinity 14
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Readings: Gospel St
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

A trip down memory lane

Hearing just one word can trigger a memory from a life time ago! So, it was when I read Amos. To connect what I'm about to say let me explain that I'm **not** a tea drinker, I can't even stand the smell of the beastly stuff! My mother, on the other hand, fortified by tea during her Land Army days, thought tea to be pure nectar! So it was that in the early 1960s before supermarkets opened in Guernsey, I joined Mummy on a shopping trip to Lipton's Grocers in the High Street. Instead of her usual brand of tea, she succumbed to the advertising buying tea-bags for the first time! Back at home, Daddy was oblivious to this signal moment drinking his tea unperturbed but Mummy was contemptuous. "Urgh!" she said, "These tea-bags are nothing but the sweepings off the floor!" On reading Amos castigating the money-grabbing Israelite traders growing fat selling the sweepings of the wheat harvest, I understood exactly what he meant.

Greed in action

Amos is livid with the traders, as their faith does not translate into godly living. Not only do they sell poor-quality produce at inflated prices, they also sell short measures! Worse, they resent that on the Sabbath Day and religious festivals they cannot trade forgetting that the one true God had given them everything. Few things corrode morals and faith as much as greed.

More devious greed

In the Gospel, Jesus gives a perspective on greed. We heard of the dilatory manager who had so abused his duties that his day of reckoning had arrived. In desperation, knowing he is too idle to graft at anything, calls his masters' debtors, together adopting the tactic of 'You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours.' He instructs them to falsify their records claiming that they owe for a lower quantity of goods and hence owe a lesser sum of money. By this duplicitous strategy he doubtless hopes that these associates will support him when he's made redundant. Amazingly, instead of condemnation his Master commends his shrewd thinking. What are we to make of this?

Who gets the best of our time?

In the Gospel, Jesus puts it all into perspective when he says, "No one can serve two masters for we'll neglect the one to love the other but both cannot receive our undivided attention. Effectively he's inferring whatever we value most in life to do it

wholeheartedly! BUT, be warned, whether we're of average means or Midas, all come to the same end. Ultimately, when we die, we cannot take our most cherished possession with us, whatever that is. It is far more faithful to be materially poor in this life because we share all that God gives us and be rich in the next. Eternity is a long time to be starving if we've not stored eternal goods in heaven. Should we not have taken this to heart we need only return to Amos who really puts the boot in with his closing comments: "The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely, I will NEVER forget any of their deeds."

A fresh perspective

Jesus' parables are ingenious in weaving together scripture, Jewish tradition and daily living that prompt questions in order to help us to see our life and faith from an objective perspective. Each of us is blessed with clothes on our back, a roof over our heads and food on the table. Blessings of which many in the Bahamas are currently lacking. None of us, however, know if our blessings will disappear, so it's what we do with them while we have them that can make a difference to us and the lives of others for the long-term. Individually, I'm sure we give to charity whether of our time or our talents. What, though do we do collectively, as a parish church to add value to our faith in daily living?

Every little helps!

We do give more than money, take for instance:

Gifts to Guernsey Welfare: these provide for the physical needs of others. What if, those gifts were brought forward to the altar with our monetary collection to receive God's blessing? Might they not give greater meaning both to the giver and bestow a blessing on the recipient?

Parish Prayers: it's not just we church members who now attend but others who live in the parish. Parish Prayers for some is their way of doing church, whereas others also worship elsewhere on Sunday. This week with the Preschool visiting us every little helps to create a community meeting in the name of Jesus.

Piped Water: now that we know there is a water supply in church, if we can construct a servery, the hospitality offered Sunday-by-Sunday could be undertaken with greater ease and, potentially, we could offer it on a weekday for parishioners' benefit. Such activities take commitment, however, collectively we have the talent to do it. By his signal sacrifice Jesus drew us closer to heaven and, by our small steps of faith in action, we continue his work. As Jesus says in the Gospel, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."

Amen.