



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday, 27 November 2022 – Advent Sunday
Readings: Isaiah 2: 1-5 and St Matthew 24: 36-44
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Grumpy or gracious?

Have we all experienced those moments when, we've just dished up dinner, put the plates on the table and ... the doorbell rings! You wend your way to the door hoping that the smell of just cooked food, the fact that you're wearing an apron and, for good measure your spouse is making a suitable clatter with knife and fork in the background just might give the caller the hint that, it's not the best time for them to have called. You open the door but it's obvious that the caller is oblivious to these signs of culinary activity what do you do? Make it patently obvious that now is not a good time for their call, or be gracious, after all, the caller might just have news that is for your wellbeing?

To change or stay as we are?

There is of course, the other scenario. You are told in advance to make preparations for your visitor, the only information that's missing is when the visitor will arrive. That's exactly the situation in Matthew's Gospel. We are told that the arrival of the Son of Man will be at a time and a day that we cannot predict, however, while we wait, we are to make the necessary preparations for hospitality, not of our houses but of our hearts wherein God will make his home. Hmm! That's a whole lot more challenging than the unexpected visitor who, we know, will leave sooner or later but the expected visitor is hoping to stay. That begs the question of how much about ourselves would we need to change to be fit to receive him?

Putting matters into context

Let's step back from the coalface for a minute and consider the bigger picture of the message that Matthew is trying to convey. Primarily, he was writing for a Jewish audience who would have been exceedingly familiar with the scriptural quotes he made. His purpose, at all times, was to help his readers understand that Biblical history points to the coming of the Messiah and that through scripture, he evidences that the Messiah, is Jesus Christ. To ignore Jesus's message, would be to repeat the same folly as their ancestors who ignored the warnings God gave them in the Days of Noah before the flood. The readers would have well understood that Matthew was implying that God had given their ancestors an earthly home, food, comfort and what did they do? With total lack of gratitude, they ignored him, did their own thing and, despite the warnings ended up unprepared, except Noah, when the flood came. So it will be with the return of the Son of Man at an unexpected hour: who will be taken and who left behind?

Changing for the better

Now, back to my question 'how much about ourselves would we need to change to be fit to receive our him?' The good news is that Matthew did not mean to make his Gospel a Bible bashing message of doom and destruction but a practical guide, as to how his readers might prepare for their visitor when he comes. Had we all the leisure in the world, we could walk step-by-step through the entire Gospel to see how Matthew unfolds his practical guide, however, that might take till the World Cup Final and members of our social committee could get twitchy bearing in mind that it's the St Andrewstide lunch at Les Cotils after this service. So, let's park Matthew and pick up on a line in Isaiah who puts everything succinctly, saying: 'Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.' What sort of light is that? It is redemptive that enables us to discern priorities pointing to God first, others second and ourselves last.

Andrew the practical disciple

Our patron saint Andrew is an exceedingly good example of practical discipleship. He was the kind of man that cared about others. He introduced his brother Peter to Jesus because he realised Jesus had the way to eternal truth and life. And in Peter Jesus knew he could build his church on the rock that Peter would become. When Philip was approached by a party of Greeks, he said to Andrew, "They want to meet Jesus!" And Andrew said, "Ok, let's take them to him". The fact that Advent Sunday trumps Andrew's Feast Day year after year, would not bother him at all. Andrew was selfless, he knew that faith and mission was not about him but rather helping people to walk in Christ's light then, having shown them the way, he melted into the background, just ready to serve when the next call came.

Our response is ...

That next call could be Christ calling us: will we be ready to receive him and willing to serve him? With the spirit of St Andrew, let us continue to walk in the light of the Lord, for some visitors, definitely, have news for our eternal wellbeing. Amen.