



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
2nd Sunday after Trinity – Sermon for 10.00am
Bible Readings: Romans Chapter 6: 1-11 & St Matthew Chapter 10:24-39
Guernsey Together – St Andrew's Together!
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

Getting things into to the correct context

Decades ago, I recall hearing a visiting preacher begin his sermon with “The Bible says ‘There is no God!’” Naturally, it had the desired effect, as everybody sat up and took notice. Whilst the quote is true, we know that the whole bible text is ‘The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.’ It’s similar to people saying ‘Money is the root of all evil’: wrong! what the bible says fully is, ‘The love of money is the root of all evil.’ A quote taken out of context doesn’t tell the whole story.

Trashed relationships, or are they?

Hold that logic in mind because today’s gospel, at first hearing, sounds the complete opposite of ‘Guernsey Together’ when, during lockdown, we looked out for each other. Is Jesus really saying that he came to rip the heart out of togetherness starting with the family? To quote: ‘I have come to set man against father and daughter against her mother, one’s foes will be members of ones’ own household.’ Of course, there’s the before and after scenarios, which explain Jesus’ comments and taken together I realised that they were absolutely on message for Phase 5 freedom! Now, I’ll explain.

Ritual v relationship

The before scenario was Jesus tackling entrenched Judaic interpretation of scripture which made worship so ritualised that the love of God seldom had the opportunity to shine out of Jewish faith. Religion had near enough become the preserve of the elite who could devote hours to it because they had the means. For the majority, to practice faith meaningfully had become unachievable because they lacked the time and money to devote to the onerous ritual.

How it did and didn’t work in practice

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is a classic example of how faith did and didn’t work in practice. The priest and Levite see the beaten-up man lying in the road and walk on by. Potentially, they wished to avoid becoming ritually unclean by the man’s wounds denying them their chance of being able to serve in the Temple. Yet the despised outsider, the Samaritan, saw in the injured Jew, a brother in need. And only last weekend we saw on the TV the ‘Black Lives Matter’ activist who put the injured white man, on his shoulder and carried him out of harms’ way.

To be or not to be ... what exactly?

So, what's the after scenario? Just like the Good Samaritan Jesus says it's necessary to choose the right way of living out our faith. In his day choosing the right way would be divisive if half chose ritualistic worship above living as Christ himself. We still have to make that choice today. Jesus gives us no let-up saying, 'Whoever loves father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.' Does that mean we disown the people who have nurtured us? No! It's a case of getting our priorities in the right order. Of acknowledging that God has given us everything even giving the life of his Son as a ransom for us. What God showed us in Jesus is unconditional love personified. If we do not love selflessly, then we are not worthy of the sacrifice he made for us. Our presence here this morning, this one brief hour of prayer, draws us closer to the heart of God in order that we can be sent out to serve him caring not just our families but all people.

A friend in need ...

Post-lockdown we rejoice with gratitude in the leadership of Dr Nicky Brink, Gavin St Pier, Heidi Soulsby and others for our health and freedom. How much more can we be thankful for the gift of the Eucharist, where we meet Christ in life-giving broken bread and wine outpoured. For, in the Eucharist we come together with united hearts and minds to become one body in that shared bread. It is that kind of unity which in lockdown enabled us to endure with fortitude and public-spiritedness the strictures placed upon us. We put our faith into action in many ways, perhaps, undertaking a vulnerable neighbour's shopping; making a donation to the social investment fund; a phone call to someone lonely or saying a prayer with someone in need. Such actions will have made a huge difference to many lives. Does it all stop now that Phase 5 is here? I do hope not.

What next?

Now, here's a test for your memory, before COVID lockdown, we worked hard on our Mission Action Plan, remember that? Our aim then was to be a church for the community and, for some, that is needed more than ever, as lockdown has left some lives in tatters: unemployment, unrealised dreams or worse, broken relationships. Our presence and the Servery is needed more than ever to draw people together, to be there for all who come, to show the love of Christ in action. May God grant us the wisdom to find a way forward to pursue his mission through this church. May we have it in our hearts to be 'St Andrew's Together', seeing a father, mother, brother, sister in all those we meet then, truly, as St Paul says in today's Epistle, we will be '... alive to God in Christ Jesus.'

Amen.