



THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
SUNDAY, JUNE 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020

## Restoration and Hospitality: Uncovering the Limits We Set



As we begin the journey through what we call in the church, “ordinary time”, having celebrated the majority of the feasts and festivals such as Easter, Pentecost and Trinity, we settle down to try to deepen our thinking...always a challenging task. It is challenging, not just because we are thinking about the Bible and its ideas, but also about the world in which we live. Inter-relating each with the other is sometimes comforting and reassuring, but also disturbing and unsettling: using Scripture to question the way we see the world, and accessing the world to provoke questions about Scripture.

Today, we confront a Gospel reading which is unnerving. Within it are Jesus’ words to his followers: *Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.* <sup>35</sup>*For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law...* What can we make of this? Did Jesus lose the plot for a brief moment? Did Matthew the Gospel writer, include this recorded saying of Jesus in his Gospel in a momentary absence of judgement? Or, does this saying, fit squarely within Jesus’ mission and his ethics? If so, how?

## GATHERING

### Preparation: “In resurrectione tua” (Taize)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-hybuhxJg8>

### Welcome

In the name of God,  
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with you

**And also with you**

### Lighting the Paschal Candle

We light the Paschal Candle, aware of our journey as a people of God, that is often reassuring, but at times uncomfortably challenging. Being Christian is not just about continuing the tradition, but also examining it, questioning, interpreting it.

**Hymn: Hail the day that sees him rise (TiS 369, to ILanfair 388, C. Wesley)**

**A Prayer Grounded in this Sunday’s Readings which focuses upon the Generosity and Restorative Vision of God**

We pray for the wanderers.  
We have been among them,  
seeking your path,  
wondering where to turn next.  
Like the Hebrew people of old,  
we find ourselves in the wilderness.

***How will we survive?***

We pray for the discarded.  
We have been among them,  
not chosen for the team,  
left behind by the friends,  
rejected by the one we loved.  
Like Hagar with her child,

we have wondered how we will live.

***Where will we find a way to quench our thirst?***

We pray for the lost.

We have been among them,  
 unsure of our direction,  
 unwilling to ask for assistance,  
 or unable to find a guide.

Like the Israelites,

lost for 40 years,

***we need your law of love to lead us.***

We pray for the restored.

We have been among them,  
 at long last welcomed  
 in the place for which we longed,  
 secure in our identity  
 as your beloved children.

When we come into your home,  
 let us share our joy

tempered by the knowledge

***that we would be nowhere***

***without your grace and mercy.***

## **The Peace**

### **LET'S HEAR THE WORD**

#### **An Anecdotal Way into the Readings**

I naturally think that my desire is mine, is of me, that I am it's subject and I know what I want. But so to think is not to see that desire is making me. The me is a highly mutable construct, radically dependent on the desires of others.

**James Alison S.J.**

The search for the scapegoat is the easiest of all hunting expeditions  
**Dwight D Eisenhower**

Give people a common enemy, and you will give them a common identity. Deprive them of an enemy and you will deprive them of the crutch by which they know who they are.

**James Alison S.J.**



WE FEEL THE OFFICE SCAPEGOAT IS A  
 KEY COMPONENT OF TEAM-BUILDING,  
 AND YOU'RE A GREAT FIT FOR THE JOB.

## Readings

### **Genesis 21:8-21 (The Good News Translation)**

This story follows the promise that God makes to Abraham and Sarah about a child, Isaac, being born to them. In this story, we hear about Hagar (Abraham's servant girl) and the son, Ishmael who she and Abraham produced. Hagar and Ishmael are dispatched to the wilderness, by a jealous aged Sarah, and Ishmael, the young child is at the point of death. Frequently, traditional biblical discussion, has interpreted the story moralistically, suggesting that Abraham is punished for hedging his bets, in producing Ishmael by means of a younger woman: in other words, not trusting God's promise that Isaac would be born at all (Genesis 16:12). Modern biblical scholarship takes another view of the story; a more positive view. This is that while Isaac will still be the heir for Israel, God will make Ishmael an heir as well and will protect him and his mother Hagar. The idea then that God works in an exclusive way, only in favour of Israel is challenged here. God's generosity is wider than just the covenant, and includes Hagar the Egyptian servant who is the first woman to name God, and Ishmael who is construed in ancient religious history as the ancestor of Muhammad, the founder of Islam.

<sup>9</sup> One day Ishmael, whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham, was playing with<sup>[a]</sup> Sarah's son Isaac.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>10</sup> Sarah saw them and said to Abraham, "Send this slave and her son away. The son of this woman must not get any part of your wealth, which my son Isaac should inherit." <sup>11</sup> This troubled Abraham very much, because Ishmael also was his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to Abraham, "Don't be worried about the boy and your slave Hagar. Do whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that you will have the descendants I have promised. <sup>13</sup> I will also give many children to the son of the slave woman, so that they will become a nation. He too is your son."

<sup>14</sup> Early the next morning Abraham gave Hagar some food and a leather bag full of water. He put the child on her back and sent her away. She left and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. <sup>15</sup> When the water was all gone, she left the child under a bush <sup>16</sup> and sat down about a hundred yards away. She said to herself, "I can't bear to see my child die." While she was sitting there, she<sup>[c]</sup> began to cry.

<sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and from heaven the angel of God spoke to Hagar, "What are you troubled about, Hagar? Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy crying. <sup>18</sup> Get up, go and pick him up, and comfort him. I will make a great nation out of his descendants." <sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well. She went and filled the leather bag with water and gave some to the boy. <sup>20</sup> God was with the boy as he grew up; he lived in the wilderness of Paran and became a skillful hunter. <sup>21</sup> His mother got an Egyptian wife for him.

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

### **Psalm 86:1-10,16-17 (Good News Translation)**

Psalm 86 has been chosen to accompany the reading of Hagar's story in Genesis 21 principally because of v. 16 with its reference to the Lord's giving strength to Yahweh's servant and saving 'the child of your serving girl'. In the psalm with its parallel line structure these two statements refer to the deliverance of the psalmist. The reference to the 'servant girl' is to the psalmist's mother. However, read in the context of the story in Genesis 21 it could refer to Ishmael and Hagar. If we do read it in that light the psalm then becomes an extended statement of trust by an outsider in a God who cares deeply for them: Ishmael in this case as speaker of the psalm.

The psalm divides into three sections. In vv. 1-7 the psalmist seeks Yahweh's aid in a time of some unspecified difficulty. The basis of the psalmist's prayer is twofold. It is based first on the psalmist's own need (vv. 1-4) but then, in vv. 5 and 7, on Yahweh's nature as good, forgiving and abounding in loyalty to all who call on the Lord. The section is enveloped by reference to the Lord 'answering' the psalmist's prayer. In v. 1 it is part of the psalmist's plea but in v. 7 the psalmist speaks more confidently of an answer being forthcoming. In vv. 8-13 the psalmist then moves on to praise the Lord above all others as sovereign over all nations and as one who does wondrous things.

**86** Listen to me, LORD, and answer me,  
for I am helpless and weak.

***2 Save me from death, because I am loyal to you;  
save me, for I am your servant and I trust in you.***

***3*** You are my God, so be merciful to me;  
I pray to you all day long.

***4 Make your servant glad, O Lord,  
because my prayers go up to you.***

***5*** You are good to us and forgiving,  
full of constant love for all who pray to you.

***6 Listen, LORD, to my prayer;  
hear my cries for help.***

***7*** I call to you in times of trouble,  
because you answer my prayers.

***8 There is no god like you, O Lord,  
not one has done what you have done.***

***9*** All the nations that you have created  
will come and bow down to you;  
they will praise your greatness.

***10 You are mighty and do wonderful things;  
you alone are God.***

***16*** Turn to me and have mercy on me;  
strengthen me and save me,  
because I serve you just as my mother did.

***17 Show me proof of your goodness, LORD;  
those who hate me will be ashamed  
when they see that you have given me comfort and help.***

## **Romans 6:1b-11 (Good News Translation)**

Paul is in tight situation. The common view is that he is too much of a libertarian, that people need rules and laws, otherwise there would be immorality all around. Perhaps this view among some of the members of the Christian community in Rome, was a reaction against the goings-on in Corinth, where yes, a part of the Corinthian church had taken a libertarian view of Paul's version of the Gospel. Paul, they argued, had abandoned scripture and produced chaos in the church. But Paul will not be cowered. He has already explained that he is not in the least bit hesitant about the value of the gospel he has been proclaiming. It comes right from the heart of God and is based alone in God's goodness (righteousness; 1:16-17). Even if in the process, Paul holds that we should disregard much of scripture, especially where it gets in the road of including both Gentile and Jew on an equal footing, he insists that the way of faith is at the heart of scripture (3:21-31).

**6** What shall we say, then? Should we continue to live in sin so that God's grace will increase? <sup>2</sup> Certainly not! We have died to sin—how then can we go on living in it? <sup>3</sup> For surely you know that when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus, we were baptized into union with his death. <sup>4</sup> By our baptism, then, we were buried with him and shared his death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might live a new life.

<sup>5</sup> For since we have become one with him in dying as he did, in the same way we shall be one with him by being raised to life as he was. <sup>6</sup> And we know that our old being has been put to death with Christ on his cross, in order that the power of the sinful self might be destroyed, so that we should no longer be the slaves of sin. <sup>7</sup> For when we die, we are set free from the power of sin. <sup>8</sup> Since we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup> For we know that Christ has been raised from death and will never die again—death will no longer rule over him. <sup>10</sup> And so, because he died, sin has no power over him; and now he lives his life in fellowship with God. <sup>11</sup> In the same way you are to think of yourselves as dead, so far as sin is concerned, but living in fellowship with God through Christ Jesus.

## **Matthew 10:24-39 (Good News Translation)**

This is a tough reading, the treatment of which requires prudence. Confessing and denying is part of the vocab of the Christian community, especially in the

troubled context of Matthew's faith community. The call here is to not trivialize the Gospel, to not reduce it to triteness. Loyalty to Jesus is about loyalty to his movement, loyalty to the Kingdom. It is about engaging meaningfully in God's liberating work, not just playing religious games. This reading makes it clear that Jesus nor Matthew our Gospel writer have time for hypocrisy.

<sup>24</sup> "No pupil is greater than his teacher; no slave is greater than his master. <sup>25</sup> So a pupil should be satisfied to become like his teacher, and a slave like his master. If the head of the family is called Beelzebul, the members of the family will be called even worse names! <sup>26</sup> "So do not be afraid of people. Whatever is now covered up will be uncovered, and every secret will be made known. <sup>27</sup> What I am telling you in the dark you must repeat in broad daylight, and what you have heard in private you must announce from the housetops. <sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather be afraid of God, who can destroy both body and soul in hell. <sup>29</sup> For only a penny you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. <sup>30</sup> As for you, even the hairs of your head have all been counted. <sup>31</sup> So do not be afraid; you are worth much more than many sparrows!

<sup>32</sup> "Those who declare publicly that they belong to me, I will do the same for them before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But those who reject me publicly, I will reject before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup> "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the world. No, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. <sup>35</sup> I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; <sup>36</sup> your worst enemies will be the members of your own family.

<sup>37</sup> "Those who love their father or mother more than me are not fit to be my disciples; those who love their son or daughter more than me are not fit to be my disciples. <sup>38</sup> Those who do not take up their cross and follow in my steps are not fit to be my disciples. <sup>39</sup> Those who try to gain their own life will lose it; but those who lose their life for my sake will gain it.

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Hymn: Blest are the pure in heart (TiS 448, Franconia, John Keble)**

**Some Thoughts about God's hospitality**

**Let's Give: Our Offerings**

**Doxology**

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*

**Prayer of Dedication**

**Prayers of the People**

The one who prays offers these final words after a series of petitions, "O Lord" and we respond, "Help us to see and do as you would".

**Closing Song: God of mercy, God of grace (TiS 452, Heathlands, Henry Francis Lyte)**

**Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is life!

Through Christ

We take delight in the other who lives beyond our group

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

***In the name of Christ***

**"The Lord bless you and keep you" ... from Indonesia**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akT32E83zjl>

**Organist: Jim Abraham**