

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost 14 Seeing the Beauty of Life Luke 13:22-30

"Lord, will only a few be saved?" (Luke 13:23). The response of Jesus is mixed. He says that some who think they are worthy above others will be in difficulty. But he still speaks about a 'narrow door' and says that all must seek to enter through its narrow portals. He speaks of the owner of the house who is reluctant to let people in, even those who have broken bread with him. Moreover, there are some figures from the past who are already welcome in the kingdom: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and prophets from the history of God's speech and actions in Israel. They will come from the East and the West, from the North and the South and eat at the banquet in the Reign of God. Surprises abound and guarantees fall in the dust. Indeed, **"Some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."** Jesus said these and similar words quite often, it seems. He opposed any kind of pretension. We may rightly rejoice in achievements. It is no great achievement to be last. Winston Churchill was back in the crowd at school, but then he got motivated. There has been too much glorification of under-achievement in the Church, especially in the explanations of such passages in Scripture. But there is also no place for the pride of privilege in the teaching of Jesus.

We have no comprehensive explanation of why Jesus thought that pride was such a deadly human presumption. Some clues are found in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. That parable attacks the presumption of thinking that one's prayers are more worthy to be heard than that of a public sinner like a tax collector. Perhaps inevitably in Christ's teaching the presumption of privilege is best seen in the light of how we see God. Theologians write about God: the saints see God. The Spirit brooding over the pages of the Gospels leads us to see God more clearly through the gaze of Christ and his teaching. His distinctive vision of God is a luminous guide for us, and one of the key reasons that we revere him so greatly.

The passage set for today is usually taken to apply to the entry into heaven at the end of this life or the Last Day. Jesus never taught about heaven without having both feet planted on the ground: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The gate is also narrow that leads to real life on earth.

Life is beautiful in the gaze of Christ, because as in Genesis it is meant to be "good". Christ not only saw heaven as it really was, he saw life as it really is as we endeavour to live it. He looked at the lilies of the field and marvelled at their transitory beauty. He saw life as beautiful, but he also saw it messed up by human madness. We need to take hold of what is beautiful in life and then enlarge it as much as we can to ultimately benefit everyone on our planet. The news tells us about ghastly matters all the time and they horrify us quite rightly. But there are people everywhere in the world living fantastic lives who are trying to do their little bit in their brief taste of history to benefit those close to them and those afar. Christ saw the beauty in life consistently, and he wept over human failings. We need to look more deeply into his teachings to see the beauty of life that he envisages on the journey to God that sustained his every moment. Life in itself is incredibly beautiful and Christ with the eyes of the Creator saw it that way.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Tuesday.

- Finance Meeting, 5:30pm, Parish Office
- Vestry Meeting, 6:30pm, Rectory

Wednesday.

- Bible Study, 10:00am.

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10am, Chapel

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Ecclesiasticus 10:12-18; Psalm 112; Hebrews 13:1-8; Luke 14:1,7-14

UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Joint Parish service/lunch: *Suggested date*-September 29th
- Harvest Sunday-October 20th