

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost 15 Changing Perspectives: the Reversal of Status and Self-Importance

“So the last shall be first and the first last”(Matthew 20:16). It is obvious that we are shaped by genetic environment, cultural and social circumstances and experiences of life. We also bring apparent predispositions in our world view. Each of us has a unique way of looking at the world, whatever the broad range of matters that affect our lives. We bring, retain and acquire certain elements in ourselves that we are very reluctant to change. We may be kind, loving, steeped in our own bitterness, cry at the world or laugh at it, serious or light-hearted, sour on life or tolerant, tough on people or accepting, stuck on money, beauty or brains or career or a whole host of matters that we present as part of “ME”. Once set on our course, we find it very difficult to change. Christ shows in many ways that he understands that 99% of people find it difficult to change once they are set on their life course. Exceptions abound, but the status claims stand. The pronouncement above shows that Christ was also interested in promoting dramatic changes of attitude. He was asking people to change their whole approach to life in a mini-second, something that he was also aware that we can do.

Christ used a whole network of relationships to call people out of their situations, but sometimes it was an on-the-spot decision that had to be made immediately. It was a moment whose time had come, and it brooked no denial. He was communicating with them, and they felt it. The one who asked for nothing for himself was asking for everything from them.

Jesus rejects spiritual ascendancy for his followers by pointing to His own servant role, one who gives his life as a ransom for many. Creation is not reducible to explanation because it falls into the mystery of God. Nor is the human soul or Nephesh reducible because it too is created by God. God inhabits his own, just as Christ appeared to those who knew him.

The setting is a marketplace and a field, a vineyard. A town and a plot of land, two dimensions of human work, source and sale. It is a parable touching heaven and touching earth, as all of Jesus’ parables do.

Jesus is removing obstacles in the way of Communion with God.

His last stand as an inhabitant of the earth is to be made lower than death. Death was considered more important than his life by those who executed him. He was demeaned, broken by others. His death for him was a mixture of suffering, pain, brokenness, abandonment and the oblivion of death, relieved only by God and the few who loved him who would not let him die in vain, bereft of remembrance. Even God clung to the memory of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. We also run after it like a child following a kite. His memory drives us to the ends of the earth to look for the disguised aspects of the reasons given for the suffering of any child, woman or man on earth and the creatures who also mutely loved him. It drives us to Communion with God. The 1662 prayer book uses Holy Communion to describe Eucharist and it is still appropriate. It is what it is all about and self-descriptive. When we come to church we should have some expectation that the divine will communicate in some way. We are in real need of Holy Communion. I use the words of Oliver Davies: “it is the common experience of the faithful that attendance at the church service mediates something of the divine to them, and that the individual Christian is able to *commune* with God, not in an unmediated way, but certainly in a very real and meaningful one.”

There can be no sense of self-importance kneeling in a pew watching the priest raise bread and wine in the Eucharist while recalling words that Christ himself taught us. It is a meeting place of life and doctrine mediated by the Spirit and clothed in faith. When we hear words like “This is my body”, “This is my blood”, and “Our Father who art in heaven”, we know that “the last will be first and the first last” because we all have access to the hands that reach out to us with bread and wine from an upper room in Jerusalem; and now they are scarred hands.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday, September 24.

- *Bible study, 10:00am*
- *Group discussion, 7:30pm, Parish office*

Thursday, September 25.

- *Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel*

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

Ezekiel 18:1-4; 25-32; Psalm 25; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:28-32
