

Materials for Virtual Worship Sunday 25 October Trinity 20

Collects for 20th Sunday After Trinity – Bible Sunday

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
help us so to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Merciful God,
teach us to be faithful in change and uncertainty,
that trusting in your word
and obeying your will
we may enter the unfailing joy of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Readings

Colossians 3: 12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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Matthew 24:30-35

Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see “the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven” with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

‘From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. Amen

Sermon by Canon Maggie Guite

‘And be thankful.’ Bible Sunday, year A October 25th 2020-10-19

Colossians 3.12-17

Matthew 24.30-35

‘...whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.’
(Colossians 3.17).

Whenever I hear those words from the end of our first reading, I remember the time they first struck me. I was in Canada, staying with a friend in her secluded house among the trees on an idyllic island. I’d spent the previous two weeks, I think, at a huge international conference, and I was as exhausted as I had ever been – physically, intellectually and emotionally. I was so pleased to be in a place where I no longer had to meet new people at every juncture, trying to jump gulfs of culture and language, trying to take in everything I was learning. I just wanted to rest and meet nobody else except my dear friend who was hosting me. The hammock in her garden by the creek beckoned – it symbolised everything I wanted to do for the next week or so. And then that dear friend told me that we were going to have lunch with some friends of hers from church. I

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was so, so grumpy about it. I really didn't want to go – but she gave me no choice.

So, off to lunch we went. And I don't remember much about it, except the friends were a family with teenage children, and at the beginning of the meal (which I think we ate outside) one of the daughters was asked to say grace. And the verse from Colossians with which I began was what she said by way of grace: 'Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.'

Maybe it stuck with me because it seemed a strange sort of grace – not a prayer, really, more of an exhortation. Or perhaps, on some level I recognised that it was a message I needed to hear: be thankful in and for everything, even when you're feeling exhausted... I don't know. But when I read or hear this text now, I always remember the circumstances of that lunch party – the tiredness I was feeling, my extreme bad grace at being dragged there (as I felt), the teenage daughter saying those words at the lunch table as words of good grace. It all comes flooding back. So, on this Bible Sunday, I want to say that this is one of the little snippets of the Bible that will always live with me. Not that I can claim that they are words that always live in me; I'm still often grumpy and unthankful, I frequently take God's gifts and goodness for granted, I don't often 'do everything' in the name of the Lord Jesus. But at least I can't say I haven't heard the message!

I guess there are little snippets of the Bible which live with us all, for one reason or another. And it's good to take them out and pay them attention every once in a while.

St Paul was really extremely insistent about his message of being thankful. In the relatively short passage from Colossians which we read today he said it no less than three times: 'be thankful...' (v.15b); 'with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...' (v. 16b); and then today's text: '...whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (v.17). Paul taught that giving thanks was essential to the act of interceding and asking God for

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things: 'Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God' (Philippians 4.6). And he didn't just teach thanksgiving, he modelled it: even when chained up in prison we're told he spent the night singing praises to God (Acts 16.25). Above all, his Epistles are full of thanksgiving. Did you know that only his letter to the Galatians (a letter he wrote when he was really annoyed) doesn't begin with thanksgiving? And usually the thanksgiving at the beginning of an epistle is a matter of him thanking God for the people he was writing to, however much stress and strain they sometimes caused him. We may sometimes be tempted to think of Paul as a dour theologian, but there was a very positive side to him: his life of thanksgiving.

So, let's try to take a leaf out of his book: he taught about being thankful because he knew it doesn't necessarily come naturally to us in every mood we're in. Some circumstances make it a lot harder than others to show gratitude. So, being thankful is what we might call 'a spiritual discipline' – something we have positively to choose and practise. Not like Pollyanna, the little girl of a rather saccharine novel and film which was popular when I was a child – Pollyanna who contorted her experience, and tried to be 'glad' about everything; but rather, like Paul, who knew only too well how hard life could be, and how much one can be disappointed in people: and yet he chose to be thankful to God in the midst of these circumstances. The constant focus of Paul's life was on Christ Jesus, his death and resurrection, the work of the Spirit flowing from him, and the hope of the glory to come through his grace. With this focus, he looked at everything, and always found cause to be thankful.

We can do the same, which is why I think the text I have chosen today – this little Bible snippet which lives with me, always attached to the memory of a Sunday lunch with strangers in Canada - this verse from Colossians, ends with words about doing everything 'in the name of the Lord Jesus', so that all of our lives may be shot through with thanksgiving 'through him'.

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Hymn (Gradual) Through all the changing scenes of life sung by St Martin's Voices

- 1 Through all the changing scenes of life,
in trouble and in joy,
the praises of my God shall still
my heart and tongue employ.
- 2 O magnify the Lord with me,
with me exalt his name;
when in distress to him I called,
he to my rescue came.
- 3 The hosts of God encamp around
the dwellings of the just;
deliverance he affords to all
who on his succour trust.
- 4 O make but trial of his love:
experience will decide
how blest are they, and only they,
who in his truth confide.
- 5 Fear him, ye saints, and you will then
have nothing else to fear;
make you his service your delight,
your wants shall be his care.
- 6 To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
the God whom we adore,
be glory, as it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

Nahum Tate (or Teate) (1652-1715) and Nicholas Brady (1659-1726)
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Hymn (Offertory) Praise my soul, the King of heaven
sung by the choir of St Mary's, Linton

- 1 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet thy tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
who like me his praise should sing?
Alleluia, alleluia,
praise the everlasting King.

- 2 Praise him for his grace and favour
to our fathers in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless:
Alleluia, alleluia,
glorious in his faithfulness.

- 3 Father-like he tends and spares us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes:
Alleluia, alleluia,
widely as his mercy flows.

- 4 Angels, help us to adore him,
ye behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before him,
dwellers all in time and space:
Alleluia, alleluia,
praise with us the God of grace.

Henry Francis Lyte (1793-1847)
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Post Communion Prayer

God of all grace,
your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry
with the bread of his life
and the word of his kingdom:
renew your people with your heavenly grace,
and in all our weakness
sustain us by your true and living bread;
who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. Amen