

The 12th Sunday after Trinity

Sunday 30th August 2020



The Collect for 12th Sunday after Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God,
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray
and to give more than either we desire or deserve:
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid
and giving us those good things
which we are not worthy to ask
but through the merits and mediation
of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

Romans 12:9 - end

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

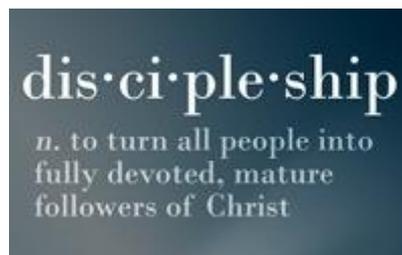


The Gospel Reading: Matthew 16: 21-end

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’ But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’

Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?’

‘For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.’



Homily from Revd Helen:

Someone was telling me how they had taken full advantage this month of the government initiative “Eat out to help out”, booking ahead and targeting tasting menus in Michelin- starred restaurants! But while some are apparently enjoying a gourmet August at reduced-rates, others have been just a little sceptical – “there’s no such thing as a free lunch”, someone else said to me, “we’ll end up paying for this through our taxes”! They were inferring that there’s a hidden cost to this seemingly generous invitation. There is nothing hidden in today’s gospel reading. At its simplest, Jesus’s invitation to his disciples then and to us now is “Follow me”. But Jesus does not conceal the fact that there is a cost of being a Christian. “*For if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*” (Matt. 16:24).

For those first disciples, following Jesus meant a literal abandonment of their home and work. The call of Jesus to us today to follow him doesn't necessarily mean we have to give up our homes and livelihoods – although for some it does - but Jesus asked his first disciples and he has asked every disciple since to give him their thoughtful and total commitment. This gospel tells us that nothing less will do. The earliest known formulation of the Creed for Christians is simply 'Jesus is Lord'. He calls us to make him our Lord, and to make him Lord is to bring every area of our lives under his control. And if Jesus Christ is our Lord then we, like his first followers, need to be open to being changed. I come across some people who are put off Christianity precisely because it does mean they will need to change. They fear that if they do commit, they will be the losers. They fear that denying self means they can't celebrate life. But Scripture tells us that Jesus came into the world that we might have life in all its fullness. God doesn't ask us to forsake the things in us that are good and made in His image, but He does ask us to get rid of the rubbish. The self we are called to deny and crucify is the fallen self that is incompatible with the things of God.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German, Lutheran pastor and theologian who stood up against Hitler and as a result was executed in Flossenbürg concentration camp in 1945. He wrote a book on this very issue called *'The Cost of Discipleship'* in which he challenged the modern day disciple to live a life under the rule and reign of Jesus Christ. Bonhoeffer contrasts what he calls 'cheap grace' with 'costly grace'. 'Cheap grace' is effectively when we follow Jesus without counting the cost. 'Cheap grace' says Bonhoeffer 'is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord's Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ'. By contrast, said Bonhoeffer, God's grace is costly grace. 'It is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of His Son.'

We only have to look at the Cross to see the measure of God's love for each one of us, to see the cost of his grace. If God loves us this much we can be sure that He will not deny us anything good- "*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32). When we do reflect on the cost of what it means to follow Christ, when we strive to deny self and take up our cross daily, we should remember that we do not need to do this in our own strength. We have a Helper - the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Jesus living in us. So let us pray daily for the grace to embrace true discipleship, with all its costliness, and so open ourselves to that fullness of life that He promises us. Amen

With greetings to you all from The Rector and Revd Helen

Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England, material from which is included here, is copyright © The Archbishops' Council 2000 and published by Church House Publishing. Bible readings are taken from the New Revised Standard Version