

Proper 21, Trinity 16

Numbers 11:4-6,10-16,24-29

James 5:13-20

Mark 9:38-50

Bit of a risk today

Irish story, Kilmacanogue, starting from here

When I was in training for theological course

When I think about next week's sermon

When I contemplate doing anything tax, selling houses, dealing with difficult issues

Of if only I had not done this

Of only I had not moved to Ireland and so on.

Just get on with it. This is a matter of taking responsibility for where I am, and the situation I'm in, and doing what I can to deal with present circumstances. Living in the present.

Living in the present and taking responsibility for my situation is at least part of the message of today's readings.

I don't find this easy.

Old Testament lesson

The Israelites are always complaining. They were freed from slavery, but then complained that their food used to be better then, and wanted someone else to do something about it.

How often do we want someone else to do something about crime, about the famine in Darfur, about the political situation.

This is the message of the Gospel really. If people call on the power of God, they have to accept the responsibilities that this brings.

Growing up

Take responsibility for ourselves, and live in the present

So often we cling to the past for the wrong reasons: trying to fool ourselves about attitudes

I'm not even talking of progress: I doubt that there is any such thing as progress in the sense that the politicians use it, only that we need to move on from where we are, not from where we would like to be. Realism.

Clairvoyance.

This means renouncing ties that bind us. Perhaps ties that bind us to the past, or to some addiction we think we can't do without.

This is, I think, what Jesus Christ means when he talks of giving up family and so on. It means stopping being dependent on them – in all senses.

leave family – link to the past

Sell all your belongings – link to the past

Jesus Christ himself respected the boundaries of others. He did not press his services on those who did not want them.

Dust from feet

Healing only those who want to be healed

Don't necessarily stick to laws, but interpret them with love

Don't get stuck on habits and traditions

If you do get stuck on laws etc, you might as well go the whole hog and hand/foot/eye

Don't condemn others who do good things but aren't part of your club. If you do, where will you stop/

Will you cut off your hand if it offends, of your foot, or your eye?

Live in the present and take responsibility for yourself.

We are increasingly, it seems, allowing others to decide more and more for us:
The more the government decides for us, the more we complain. And yet when a baby is attacked by dogs, we want laws brought in to curb dogs.
So, do we want freedom, or do we want state-organised protection. We can't have both.

If we have freedom, then so does everyone else, and state protection is reduced. We need to take responsibility for what we do and the risks we take
If we have state governing what we do, we lose freedom. We must accept that our options are limited.
We can't have the good bits of both. We can't have freedom for us, and protection from what others might do to us, since that would curb the freedom of others.

We need to take responsibility for ourselves and accept reasonable risks. Responsibility to look after yourself.

The need for prayer

prayer does not change God's purpose, it releases it' – the 'key that unlocks the forces of good in the world. **Said before at Carsington**

And the other big message that I take home from today's gospel is that we must not come between anyone else and God. We must do nothing that hinders contact between another being and God, and do everything to aid it – if necessary getting out of the way. In a family situation, this means not clinging to our children, allowing them to leave the nest

In church situation it means not forcing people to conform to what is right for us, but accepting that different people see things differently, and respecting the views of others.

Accept what others do that is good, and do not question their motives.

Lionel Blue

He made his own explorations and decisions
He discovered that he didn't know where he fitted
And I find myself in a similar position
But then I think we made our God too small
Evangelical, Catholic, other religions, missions

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice,
which is more than liberty.

For the love of God is broader
than the measure of man's mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

But we make his love too narrow
By false limits of our own
And we magnify his strictures
With a zeal He will not own.

If our love were but more simple,
we should take him at his word;
and our life would be all gladness
for the goodness of the Lord.