

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B September 13, 2015

Obedying the call of Wisdom, embracing God's instruction, watching how we use our tongues, taking up our crosses and following Jesus – these are the themes that come together in the Lectionary this week. They may seem diverse, but they can all be brought together under the label of integrity. This quality marks a life that is true, just, gracious and compassionate, and it's a quality that is desperately needed in our world today.

May the words we speak and sing in worship become the actions and attitudes of our lives.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

Proverbs 1 : 20-33

This collection of sayings, religious and secular, is attributed to the proverbial wisdom of Solomon. Here wisdom is given a voice, and a divine quality, as she appeals to us not to be foolish, to listen to her and turn away from sin.

or **Isaiah 50 : 4-9a**

Isaiah pictures a faithful servant of God who is deeply and unjustly humiliated, but remains dignified in suffering. Whatever the original context of these words, the church has always seen them as foretelling the suffering of Jesus.

Psalm 19

Creation proclaims God's glory, and the Psalmist celebrates God's law that brings life, refreshes the soul, gives insight and wisdom, and corrects him when he goes astray.

or **Wisdom of Solomon 7:26-8:1**

A celebration of the beauty of Wisdom who reflects God's light and goodness, reveals God's activity, and shapes people into God's friends.

OR Psalm 116:1-9: The Psalmist loves God and praises God because God has heard his cry for mercy and for rescue, and God has compassionately saved him, delivering him from death.

James 3 : 1-12

This general letter of instruction in Christian behaviour now tells us to take great care not only in what we may teach others by in everything we say. Our tongue can be greatly influential for good or for ill.

Mark 8 : 27-38

Mark has already shown that opposition to Jesus simmered beneath all the popularity. Now we come to a turning point in his Gospel. He introduces the darker themes of cross and rejection - which in some way every disciple must expect to face.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp19_RCL.html

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

Keep, we beseech thee,
O Lord, thy Church with thy perpetual mercy;

www.churchnewsireland.org

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and, because the frailty of man without thee cannot but fall,
keep us ever by thy help from all things hurtful,
and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

God,
who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:
Grant that your people may be fervent
in the fellowship of the gospel;
that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Jesus shows his tender compassion in healing the daughter of a gentile woman and a deaf mute. Yet in need of his healing presence, we are moved to pray "Lord, in your mercy." Our response is, "Hear our prayer."

God of mercy, we pray for our global church, that it may proclaim the gospel clearly and faithfully, and that those who hear may know its transforming power. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, bless the children leaving home for their first days of school. Keep them safe. Let them find companions and friends, and grant them the joy of learning. Enable those who teach to discern learning problems, and address them with patience and love. Grant all teachers a sense of their high calling, that they may be sources of knowledge and wisdom. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom, bless the school administrators of our land. Let their planning, implementing, counseling, and disciplining be judicious and wise. By your Spirit, foster harmony in all parts of school life. May parents find reason to be encouraged with the progress of their children. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of insight, we pray for those in our secondary and post-secondary institutions of learning who seek to chart a life course and pursue a satisfying career. Give them able counselors and good models of a worthy life. Let the instruction they receive be such as will bring both knowledge in their disciplines and true wisdom. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, receive the simplicity of our requests.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

P Blessed Lord, You have made Your house a place of prayer and given us the name of Your Son, that we may call upon You on behalf of all who stand in need.
(Silence for prayer.)

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- P That God may awaken our hearts from death to life, from unbelief to faith, by the power of the Spirit; that we may respond with trusting hearts to the good news of the Gospel; and that the whole world may hear of Jesus' death and resurrection through our words and actions . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That God may bless those who teach God's Word and those who learn it—in Sunday school, confirmation classes, and Bible study; that such learning may equip God's people to serve Him well and do His bidding here on earth . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That the trials and troubles of this life may not overcome our faith; that we may remain faithful in a world ever more unfriendly to our Saviour and His Kingdom; and that God may richly bless the work of those who labour to plant the Church both here and throughout the world . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That the Lord of the Church may protect and defend His Church and all her pastors, missionaries, church workers and lay leaders; that together we may partner in the proclamation of the Gospel—both in words of witness and actions of love and compassion; and that God may grant His blessing to this congregation and all her ministries . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That the sick may be healed, the suffering find relief, the grieving know comfort, and the dying be given peace, according to the good and gracious will of God. . . *[especially for _____]* that God would be their help in time of need and grant them grace sufficient for their struggle . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That God may grant His blessing to those who protect and care for us here, especially police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel, and the service men and women who protect us throughout the world; that God may bless our leaders and prosper the work of peace between the nations . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That we may rejoice in the blessings God has supplied to us and use them in support of the poor and those in need; that God may move us to welcome the stranger in His name; and that God may guide us in the care of those near life's end . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**
- P That through confession and absolution God may break down every barrier among us and unite us in faith and service to Him; that we may worthily assemble at the Holy Supper of our Lord; and that we may acknowledge His gifts of grace with faith to receive the full benefit of this communion in His body and blood . . . *(Silence for prayer.)* Let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.**

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P That we may delight in returning to the Lord what is His in the time, talents, material goods, and financial treasures we bring; and that we may not withhold anything from the Lord but offer it in humble service to Him and for His glory . . . (*Silence for prayer.*) Let us pray to the Lord.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P That our heavenly Father would grant us these things and whatsoever we have asked Him for through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we trust and rely both now and forevermore.

C **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE **St Matthew - 21st September**

Lord of compassion, your unconditional love won Matthew for the kingdom. Through your call, he opened his home to you and a company of outcasts . You led him into a greater ministry by including him as one of the twelve. We celebrate your understanding and pray, "Equip us with your Spirit's insight", and respond, "Guide us, we pray."

That your will may be done and your kingdom come among us, we pray that our Church of Ireland may fill its pastoral vacancies by recruiting women and men of faith. Equip us with your Spirit's insight. **Guide us, we pray.**

That the church's selection bodies be wise, prayerful, and objective in their work of discerning faithful pastors to serve Christ's church. Equip us with your Spirit's insight. **Guide us, we pray.**

That the Church of Ireland Theological Institute may enjoy energetic, creative governance; wise and consistent administrators; dedicated and enthusiastic faculty; and highly motivated students. Equip us with your Spirit's insight. **Guide us, we pray.**

That our university and college chalcinies may awaken a vision of service to Christ, we ask. Equip us with your Spirit's insight. **Guide us, we pray.**

That our congregations may be ever faithful in recalling the need for Christian ministry in the church and in the world. Equip us with your Spirit's insight. **Guide us, we pray.**

That all walks of life and careers in classroom, church, business, industry, service, home and elsewhere, may reflect the care and mercy of the Word. Equip us with your Spirit's insight. **Guide us, we pray.**

Open our minds and hearts to you, O God, that all may be made new, and righteousness, truth and justice prevail. **Amen.**

POST COMMUNION

Eternal God,
we have received these tokens of your promise.
May we who have been nourished with holy things
live as faithful heirs of your promised kingdom.

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We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

O God, Wisdom of the universe,
you bear the pain of your people.
Grant us the gift of wisdom,
that we may discern your way
and live justly and graciously
amid the struggles of this world. Amen.

Friends in Christ,
God invites us to hold the needs of our sisters and brothers
as dear to us as our own needs.
Loving our neighbors as ourselves,
we offer our thanksgivings and our petitions
on behalf of the church and the world.
Hear our prayers, God of power,
and through the ministry of your Son
free us from the grip of the tomb,
that we may desire you as the fullness of life
and proclaim your saving deeds to all the world. Amen.

As you heard the prayer of Isaac and Rebekah, O God,
and guided them in the way of your love,
so listen now to those who call upon you.
Move us to praise your gracious will,
for in Christ Jesus you have saved us from the deeds of death
and opened for us the hidden ways of your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Lord God, friend of those in need,
your Son Jesus has untied our burdens
and healed our spirits.
We lift up the prayers of our hearts for those still burdened,
those seeking healing,
those in need within the church and the world.
Hear our prayers
that we may love you with our whole being
and willingly share the concerns of our neighbors. Amen.

Creator God,
you call us to love and serve you
with body, mind, and spirit
through loving your creation
and our sisters and brothers.
Open our hearts in compassion
and receive these petitions
on behalf of the needs of the church and the world.
Holy One,
hear our prayers and make us faithful stewards

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of the fragile bounty of this earth
so that we may be entrusted with the riches of heaven. Amen.

We praise your abiding guidance, O God,
for you sent us Jesus, our Teacher and Messiah,
to model for us the way of love for the whole universe.
We offer these prayers of love
on behalf of ourselves and our neighbors,
on behalf of your creation and our fellow creatures.
Loving God,
open our ears to hear your word
and draw us closer to you,
that the whole world may be one with you
as you are one with us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of mercy and healing,
you who hear the cries of those in need,
receive these petitions of your people
that all who are troubled
may know peace, comfort, and courage.
Life-giving God,
heal our lives,
that we may acknowledge your wonderful deeds
and offer you thanks from generation to generation
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

God of salvation,
who sent your Son to seek out and save what is lost,
hear our prayers
on behalf of those who are lost in our day,
receiving these petitions and thanksgivings
with your unending compassion.
Redeeming Sustainer,
visit your people
and pour out your strength and courage upon us,
that we may hurry to make you welcome
not only in our concern for others,
but by serving them
generously and faithfully in your name. Amen.

Wisdom of God,
from the street corners and at the entrances to the city
you proclaim the way of life and of death.
Grant us the wisdom to recognize your Messiah,
that following in the way of the cross,
we may know the way of life and glory. Amen.

Through suffering and rejection, O God,
you bring forth our salvation,
for in Jesus you embrace our humanity
and transform our lives by the glory of his cross.

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Grant that for the sake of the gospel
we may rebuke the lure of this world,
take up our cross,
and follow your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Proverbs 1:20-33:

- Wisdom, from the Greek *sophia*, is virtually always depicted as a woman or in feminine imagery, as the word itself is feminine in both Greek and Hebrew. This *sophia*, of course, is the basis of the imagery of the Re-Imaging conference that caused such controversy over referring to God as Sophia. What the difference is between using Sophia and using Logos to refer to Christ sometimes is unclear to me, except that sticky issue of gender! But I digress...
- "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?" This verse (22) puts a smile on our faces, but unfortunately, I think it's a serious question! I think we actually like to pretend we don't know what's going on a lot of the time. If we don't know what's going on, we can't be held accountable for action. God doesn't want to let us off the hook so easily, however!

Psalm 19:

- "The heavens are telling the glory of God." This psalm is often set to music.
- This imagery of the sun "like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy", this personification of the sun draws to my mind Greek/Roman mythology, and no doubt made contemporaries of the psalmist think of similar images of sun-gods in other religions. The difference? Here the sun is put into place by God, not a god in itself.
- God is more than gold, sweeter than honey. A simple message - but reminds us of things we put too often before God in our lives.
- "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations..." This verse is often used by pastors before they begin preaching. I *like* it, but if there's a way to use a Bible verse too much to the point of over doing, this one makes it on my personal list!

James 3:1-12:

- "We who teach will be judged with greater strictness." (Can we insert "or preach" into that sentence?! All through college and seminary, my younger brothers, whenever I did something they didn't like, would say, "And *you're* going to be a *minister*?" Very appreciated, of course!)
- There is an easy children's time object lesson to go with this verse, all about watching what we say and how we speak. It's called "[Watch What You Say](#)". I always have a hard time with children's time, so I try to share helpful ideas when I can!
- OK, I know this passage is all about how we speak and how we affect one another with our words, but I think it is also an interesting interpretation if we stick with the original substitution I made: read this all as a metaphor for pastoral leadership. Can we function as pastors as the bridle on a horse? The rudder for a ship? A small fire in a forest? Aside from the "restless evil, full of deadly poison" part, I kind of like it!

Mark 8:27-38:

- "Who do people say that I am?" Who do people say that *you* are? It would be a good exercise to find out - ask people to describe you in 5 words. How are you seen?
- Peter gets it right at first: Jesus is the Messiah. But though he knows the right words to say, he shows he doesn't yet get what that word means, by rebuking Jesus when Jesus shares his path of suffering with Peter.
- Jesus returns by saying who he thinks *Peter is* at that moment: Satan!
- To save your life, you must lose it, if you lose your life for Christ, you save it. Certainly there is a degree of literal-ness here. But also, I think of things we say we "lose ourselves" in, like our work, our art, our passions, our music, our spouse, etc. Christ wants us to lose ourselves . . . in him!

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Wisdom, the power of the tongue and proclamation of God's glory all come together in the Lectionary this week. The reading from Proverbs, Psalm 19 and the passage from the Wisdom of Solomon all speak about the wisdom that comes from obeying God's instruction, directions and ways. The Isaiah reading, Psalm 116 and the Gospel all connect around the suffering that comes from following God's ways, and God's faithfulness in rescuing those who cry to out to God. Finally, James speaks about the importance of disciplining our tongues, using them for praise, blessing and teaching, rather than cursing. The theme that brings all of these readings together can be summed up in one word: integrity. We live with integrity when we embrace God's wisdom and live it out, rather than just speaking words that we do not put into action. We live with integrity when we stay faithful to God's ways, and speak God's message, even though it often results in suffering, struggle and sacrifice. We live with integrity when we acknowledge who Jesus is and proclaim him as the Christ, while understanding that he is a crucified God who calls us to take up our own crosses. We live with integrity when our lives reflect the cross and resurrection of Jesus, and when our words are filled with praise, blessing and wisdom, rather than cursing. When our words, our thoughts, our attitudes and our actions all align with one another, and with the ways of God that were taught and lived by Jesus, then our lives are lives of integrity and they are lives that add value and make a life-giving contribution to the world.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: The call for integrity may seem naïve in a world in which corruption, expediency and power games appear to be the order of the day. It is not uncommon to hear political, business, community and religious leaders say one thing and then discover that their actions are completely different. It can be painful to watch as self-protection, self-aggrandisement and power-grabbing become the norm, especially among those who are leaders. Unfortunately, when integrity gets lost, so too does justice. It becomes very hard to get aid to those who need it, when leaders siphon off money and resources for themselves. It can be tough to get laws changed when corporate lobbies invest millions in maintaining an unjust legal advantage. It can be disheartening to work on behalf of the marginalised and vulnerable, when legal and financial systems are biased

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against them. It can become very tempting to sacrifice our integrity just to get things done. But, to do this is to lose faith in the Gospel, and to violate the justice and integrity of God's Reign. As hard as it can sometimes be to hold on to our integrity, in the end, it's the only thing that can bring about authentic transformation in our world. When the integrity of Christ is manifest in our lives, it will rub off on others, and slowly systems and people will change. Certainly the signs that integrity is becoming increasingly important to the people of the world are all there – in the expose's of corrupt and immoral behaviour among leaders, in the call for more just systems through movements like Occupy, and in the growing power in online and other forms of citizen activism. As followers of Christ, let's celebrate integrity wherever we find it, and let's seek to maintain integrity as one of our highest values.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Perhaps the greatest threat to our integrity in our homes, churches and personal lives, is the siren call of expediency and consumerism. It's far easier to create "sexy" worship services that make people feel good, but leave their garbage unchallenged, than it is to hold people accountable to the Gospel. It is far easier to "go with the flow" than to stand up for truth, justice and love, especially among our own family members and friends. It is far easier to preach great self-help messages than to call people to allow Christ to change them. Sometimes, rather than ensure our words have integrity, we simply remain silent. Sometimes, rather than holding to values of integrity and justice, we simply turn a blind eye to injustice. Sometimes, rather than get our hands dirty in serving others, it is easier to throw money at the problems we face and hope that someone else will deal with the practicalities. But, we all know the power of lives of integrity. We have all been impacted by people of faith whose lives have embodied what they believe in every part. And we have all seen the positive impact that such integrity can have on relationships, on communities, on our witness for Christ, and on the individuals who are served and saved by people of integrity. May we be known less for our opulent sanctuaries and professional standards of performance in worship, and more for embodying the gracious words of Christ, the bold wisdom of Christ, and the sacrificial love of Christ.

SERMON OUTLINE

Mark 8:27-38 Who do people say that I am?

Jesus moves on to Caesarea Philippi, N of Sea of Galilee - a pagan territory originally called PANEAS in honour of the Roman god PAN who had a shrine there - rebuilt by Herod's son, Philip, in honour of Tiberius Caesar

1. the Challenge of Jesus 13-15: his identity?

- a) who do people say that I am? Jn Bpt, Elijah, Jeremiah...
- b) who do you say that I am? > Peter... US..

2. the Confession of Peter 16: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God* - 2-fold acknowledgement of Jesus....

- a) his Person - the Christ - Messiah - Anointed One...
- b) his Parentage - son of the living God - Jn 3.16...

3. the Church of God 17-20: to be built on rock - 3 ideas:

- a) Peter himself - most prominent & influential disciple;
- b) Peter's confession of faith in Christ...
- c) Jesus himself - 1 Cor 3.11: *no other foundation than JC*

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The Church = ekklesia = *called out* - by X - is (Eph 2:20) built on the foundation of the apostles & prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief corner-stone. It therefore has:-

- i) great possibilities - golden opportunities for service;
- ii) power - *the gates of hell will never overcome it (18)*;
- iii) potential - *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven* - to open doors of faith by the preaching the Gospel

This Peter did faithfully in the post-Resurrection days of apostolic mission & his 2 epistles - & traditionally the Gospel of St Mark.... Such work continues through the Mission of the Church today throughout the world....

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

[."The Heartbreaking Messiah,"](http://day1.org/1434-the_heartbreaking_messiah) the Rev. Dr. David Lose, Day 1,
http://day1.org/1434-the_heartbreaking_messiah

["Christ and Everything Else Thrown In,"](http://day1.org/1008-christ_and_everything_else_thrown_in) The Rev. Peter Marty, Day 1
http://day1.org/1008-christ_and_everything_else_thrown_in

["Following Jesus Is For Losers,"](http://day1.org/4048-following_jesus_is_for_losers) the Rev. J.C. Austin, Day 1
http://day1.org/4048-following_jesus_is_for_losers

"Wisdom," Frederick Buechner Sermon Illustrations.
<http://frederickbuechner.com/content/weekly-sermon-illustration-wisdom>

"Who Is Jesus?" the Rev. Ken Kesselus, Sermons that Work
<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2012/08/28/16-pentecost-proper-19-b-sept-16-2012/>

[Ministry Matters](http://www.ministrymatters.com/bin/2742/this-sunday-91612), September 16, 2012.
www.ministrymatters.com/bin/2742/this-sunday-91612

CHILDREN

Worshiping with Children, Proper 19B, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown
<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2012/08/year-b-proper-19-24th-sunday-in.html>

"Tongue Twisting," Frances Woodruff, On the Chancel Steps
<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2012/09/03/tongues/>

["Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para ninos,"](http://www.sermons4kids.com/) Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles.
Sermons4Kids.com.
<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

["Beginnings," "Who Am I?"](http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-or24su.php) Children's Time, in Sermons and Liturgies. Richard J. Fairchild.
(Scroll down in liturgies to find Children's Time.)
<http://www.rockies.net/~spirit/sermons/b-or24su.php>

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HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Thou But Suffer God To Guide Thee

Take Up Your Cross

Be Thou My Vision

Take My Life And Let It Be

Let Me Shine

May The Words Of My Mouth (Link to YouTube video)

Lord, Reign In Me (Link to YouTube video)

As We Gather