

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity YEAR B October 21 2012

In the upside-down (or right-side up) Reign of God, greatness is defined very differently from the power, fame and fortune criteria that is used by most human systems. Unfortunately, even we who claim to follow Jesus struggle with this essential truth of the Gospel. Yet, when we are faced with the Great Creator who willingly becomes a humble human man, we cannot avoid the call of God to the greatness of service and sacrifice.

May we reject any expression of faith or worship that glorifies systems of wealth, power and instant gratification, and may we embrace again the worship of humble, selfless service.

INTRODUCTIONS

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

Job 38 : 1-7 [3-41]

This book explores why Job, or any other person, should suffer. Surely God could prevent it? In this answer the writer's imagination soars as he explains that one of us can possibly understand the immensity of God nor comprehend his ways.

or **Isaiah 53 : 4-12**

The prophet describes the suffering undergone by the Jews, and their time of exile, as being undergone on behalf of the sins of others. The familiar words are easily transferred to Jesus, who according to today's Gospel foresaw that he must undergo death and resurrection for our sake.

Psalm 104:1-9,24,35c

In praise of God's glory and majesty, for the way God established the earth and commanded the waters, and for the way God has filled the earth with God's creation.

Or Psalm 91:9-16

God promises protection and rescue to those who are devoted to God, and who trust in God, crying out to God in times of trouble.

Hebrews 5 : 1-10

This author's great purpose is to interpret Christ's work in terms of the Jewish priesthood, whose task was to offer sacrifices to God for the sins of the people. Here, with many echoes of the Old Testament, he tells how Christ as the perfect and eternal High Priest offered himself once for all, for the world's salvation.

Marks 10 : 35-45

Jesus has just shared with his friends his expectation that soon, in Jerusalem, he will be executed. But the Twelve still argue between themselves about the greatness and glory they believe is about to come, not understanding the kingdom life of self-giving and service.

TEXT OF READINGS

http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearB_RCL/Pentecost/BProp24_RCL.html

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O almighty and most merciful God,
of thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech thee,

www.churchnewsireland.org

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from all things that may hurt us;
that we, being ready both in body and soul,
may cheerfully accomplish those things
that thou wouldest have done;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Collect Two

Almighty God,
whose Holy Spirit equips your Church with a rich variety of gifts:
Grant us so to use them that, living the gospel of Christ
and eager to do your will,
we may share with the whole creation in the joys of eternal life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 1

Presider or deacon

Let us approach the throne of grace and pray in the name of Jesus, who bore the sins of many.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering, and for the people of God in every place.

Lord, have mercy.

For all peoples and their leaders, and for mercy and justice in the world.

Lord, have mercy.

For good weather, abundant fruits of the earth, and peaceful times.

Lord, have mercy.

For doctors, nurses, and hospital staff, and for all who work in the medical arts.

Lord, have mercy.

For the sick and the suffering, travellers and refugees, prisoners and their families, and the dying and dead.

Lord, have mercy.

For our parish/town/village/city and those who live in it, and for our families, companions, and all those we love.

Lord, have mercy.

Lifting our voices with all creation, with Saint _____ and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

Presider

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Source of eternal salvation, who gave us a great high priest in heaven, hear the prayers of your servants and let all your beings sing for joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE 2

One rich man, beloved by Jesus, could not consent to sell all, give to the poor, and risk following Jesus. In sadness, he turned away. Total commitment is not easy for those who have much. We pray, "Lord, in your mercy," and we respond "Hear our prayer."

We pray for the church in every place and in all its various expressions. Grant it a heart of faith that is true to the gospel. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our archbishops, bishops and clergy.
Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

That our Prime Minister _____ and our First Minister _____ may see citizens united in the tasks of helping the impoverished; creating opportunities for employment; enabling true justice for the victimized, convicted and imprisoned; and ethnic groups, we pray. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

That our Select Vestry and committees, may have the necessary vision and empowerment to make decisions that will result in numerical and spiritual growth, we pray. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

That the seniors of our congregation may still feel wanted and included in the ongoing ministry of Christ. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

That those who teach and those who learn may have the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

P: Gracious God, whatever we lack in insight, energy and fulfillment, by your mercy, supply.

Amen

POST COMMUNION

God our Father,
whose Son, the light unfailing,
has come from heaven to deliver the world
from the darkness of ignorance:
Let these holy mysteries open the eyes of our understanding
that we may know the way of life, and walk in it without stumbling;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS

Eternal One, whose thoughts and ways are not ours,
you alone are God, awesome, holy, and most high.
School us in the ways of faith and wisdom,
that we, like Job,

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may learn to truly see and hear,
and in humility find blessing. Amen.

Creator God,
you are wrapped in light as a garment,
clothed with honour and majesty.
Enlighten us with true faith and humble obedience
that seeks to serve others in your name. Amen.

Most High,
your Anointed One offered himself freely
as witness against our violence,
our acts of oppression,
and our sin.
As you delighted to call him your Son,
give us the courage to bring you equal delight
by our willingness to drink the cup of sacrifice
on behalf of our sisters and brothers,
and, with them, offer you praise unceasing
and lives transformed
as true heirs of your grace-filled realm. 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 neighbours 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 neighbours. Amen.

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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
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 neighbours,
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.

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Job 38:1-7, (34-41):

- Would we be prepared for God to answer us in such a direct way like this? God telling us, "Get ready, I'm about to tell you how it is?" I don't think I would be!
- Still, God's answer, while vivid and beautiful in its poetic way, isn't one that would satisfy me if I were asking the questions Job had been asking. God's answer is basically "I'm God, and you aren't. How can you question me?" But my own experience of God finds God more sympathetic to my questioning - even if not providing any more answers. For me, not having answers is very frustrating. But I'm trying always to accept that God is beyond my understanding. Can you have faith without all the answers? I guess that's why it is faith!
- Biblical sarcasm - this part I enjoy. God is pretty sarcastic in his answer with Job. I'm glad to know my preferred style of humor is one God enjoys too!

Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c:

- "Bless the Lord, O my soul." We normally ask God to bless us and others. What does it mean for us, instead, to bless God, to be a blessing to God?
- This psalm almost reads like a reverse of the Job passage, doesn't it? Instead of God prompting Job to remember that God has done, here the psalmist remembers on his own what God has done, in the same sort of vivid imagery.
- All the clothing/fabric imagery in this psalm is interesting - God is enveloping, wrapping around us and the world, surrounding, covering, protecting.
- The imagery in 6-9 talks about water - water "fleeing" as if water is the enemy. Flood and safety from another flood.

Hebrews 5:1-10:

- Verses 1-4 actually describe, to an extent, what we mean by ordained ministry. A good resource for hopeful ordinands!
- Check out Genesis 14:17-20 and Psalm 110:4 for context about Melchizedek.
- I don't usually think of Jesus as a "high priest." What priestly functions do you see Jesus filling? How is Jesus priest? The author gives his answer in verses 7-10.
- :8 - I also don't think of Jesus as one who had to "learn" obedience, but as one who simply was obedient. But maybe there is more power in thinking of Jesus learning to obey God through his faithfulness to God's plan for him. What do you think?

Mark 10:35-45:

- James and John are apparently unfazed by their previous ([and recent](#)) conversation with Jesus and the other disciples about who is greatest, where Jesus reminded them about the first being last and taking up the cross and all that . . .
- James and John say that they are able to walk the same path as Jesus, in their quest for greatness. Jesus takes them at their word, and they probably wish they hadn't agreed quite so quickly!
- The other ten are mad at James and John - why? For asking a silly question of Jesus? For pledging to follow him in a way they hadn't? Because they want the places of greatness for themselves?

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- Jesus talks (again!) about a different world-order, a different system of greatness and power. How many times must he tell them this opposites first-last master-servant stuff before they get it? How many times must he tell us?

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

What does greatness mean? In the Lectionary this week we are confronted with God's greatness as God questions Job, but we are also faced with the greatness of the suffering servant who is persecuted and suffers for the sake of others. We see God's glory revealed in creation, but we also encounter God's glory in God's compassionate rescue of those who cry out to God. We recognise the greatness of Jesus whom God has appointed as a high priest because he journeyed through suffering and is able to offer salvation. And we learn that those who are great in God's Reign are those who are willing to be the servants of all – just as Jesus came not to be served but to serve. The contrast between the God of creation and the suffering servant, Jesus, is a powerful way for the Lectionary to address the question of greatness. While God has all the power and glory that the name implies, even God does not express God's greatness in domination and conquest. Rather, in the incarnation, God's glory and greatness are revealed through humility, service and the embrace of suffering. For those who seek greatness on God's terms, we must expect that the same should be true for us – and this is exactly what Jesus taught. The challenge for us this week is to decide whether we can find the courage to define greatness in this way, and, if we can, to live as "great ones" in God's Reign.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: It's amazing and encouraging that, in this world obsessed with adversarial political discourse and the allure of fame and wealth, we still honour those who give themselves sacrificially in service of others. It is not the leaders who use their power for their own aggrandisement that we truly honour. It's not the corporate executives that amass huge fortunes that really impress us. It's not the celebrities that get addicted to their own fame and influence that inspire us. It's those who, having reached a position in which they could use their influence and resources for personal benefit, lay it all aside in service of the greater good. These are our heroes and heroines, and these are the ones who bring the greatest healing to the world. The temptation to always seek the bigger and better ministry, organisation, impact or influence can lead us to act in arrogance, and to seek to manipulate or dominate others according to our own agendas. But, what is desperately needed in our world is a culture of "greatness" that celebrates self-giving, humility, service and small acts of contribution to the greater good. The creation of this culture starts with us when we choose not to get caught up in the hype over the latest celebrity or movement, but to embrace and celebrate the humble, serving people around us. In addition, when use our vote and our contributions to reward humility, service and sacrifice, rather than accumulation,

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hubris and power-mongering, we can make a significant difference to the way our world works.

LOCAL APPLICATION: In a world of reality television, it's tempting to define greatness, even in the church, by the world's terms. When we've "succeeded" – amassed lots of money or recognition or influence – then we consider ourselves great, and if we haven't managed to do this, we try to find ways to get it right. But, in this quest for universal exceptionalism, we've lost our souls, and the knowledge of true greatness. We've forgotten how significant it is for a struggling single mother to raise children to be responsible and generous. We've forgotten how powerful the influence of an attentive parent or grandparent can be. We've forgotten what a difference small acts of kindness and service can make to our neighbourhoods and communities. We've even forgotten that the quest to be great in God's Reign can lead to the same competitiveness that the disciples experienced – even to the extent that we compare who is the "servingest" of us all! Yet, the ultimate test of greatness is when greatness becomes irrelevant – when we no longer care about how we're seen, or what we've achieved, and we begin to live as humble, sacrificial servants simply because it's the right thing to do, and it's one of the best ways to contribute to the healing of the world. Ironically, it's the moment we stop seeking greatness or defining ourselves by the quest for greatness that we become authentic followers of Christ, and that's when we become truly great, according to God's standard.

SERMON OUTLINE

Mk 10:32-45:- towards Jerusalem....

Jesus was on his final journey to Jerusalem - leading a group - like an Eastern shepherd - fulfilling his ministry...

a) disciples - *astonished* v32 - that he should be going...

b) followers - *afraid* - at what might happen to him...

Jesus deals with 3 different/differing areas of life...

1. Human Suffering – he was to experience (33/4) *the Son of Man will be betrayed.. will condemn him to death... will mock him & spit on him, flog him & kill him... 3 days later he will rise...* Crucifixion – a terrible mode of execution - *the most cruel of deaths (Cicero)*

2. Honour Seeking - of James & John - (35-40) - seeking Position... Prestige... Power... v37:- *Let us sit at your right & at your left in your glory* - no place for Peter!

Mt 20.20 says it was their mother, Salome, made the request! Jesus reminds them that the way to glory lies - not through favouritism - but through faithfulness!

He challenges them to share His fate - even unto death...

James did die a martyr's death - at the hands of Agrippa...

John suffered exile on island of Patmos as an aged man...

3. Humble Service- his followers (41-45) path to greatness lies through service - v43:- *whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant & whoever wants to be first*

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must be the slave of all - no privileges/rights/favouritism... of Jesus - why he came to earth/ share our humanity:-

a) to serve - *did not come to be served, but to serve...*

b) to save - *to give his life a ransom for many... Saviour!*

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"Good News?" Bishop William H. Willimon, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1474-good_news

"Key to the Outside," the Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1013-key_to_the_outside

"The Point of Suffering," Dianne Bergant, CSA, *America*

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=3221

"What, Me Become a Slave?" John R. Donahue, SJ, *America*

http://www.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=2235

CHILDREN

"Sermon of the Week," / "Mensajes para ninos," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Coloring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

Mustard Seeds, "Looking at the Bigger Picture," Proper 24, 2009. A lectionary-based ideas resource for leaders of contemporary worship, Ann Scull, Gippsland, Australia.

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.co.uk/2009/09/proper-22-ordinary-27-pentecost-18-b.html>

Story for Children's Worship and Family Activity, Ordinary 29, at word-sunday.com: A Catholic Resource for the Lectionary by Larry Broding.

<http://www.word-sunday.com/index.html>

"The Chief and the Baby," 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-or29smsu.php>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Hail Thou Once Despised Jesus

O Worship The King

O Jesus I Have Promised

Joyful Joyful We Adore Thee

The Servant King

Now and Forever

Above All

That's Why We Praise Him

Lord Reign In Me

Creation's King