



Sunday, 23 August, 2020

Trinity 11

O God, you declare your almighty power
most chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace,
that we, running the way of your commandments,
may receive your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through 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.

First Reading (Exodus 1:8-2:10)

Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. He said to his people, 'Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.' Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them.

The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, 'When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.' But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, 'Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?' The midwives said to Pharaoh, 'Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.' So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live.'

Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months. When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child

and nursed it. When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

Second Reading (Romans 12:1-8)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Gospel Reading (Matthew 16:13-20)

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the

gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

Reflection for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Alison Maddocks

(Diocesan Stewardship Advisor)

Hello, I'm Alison Maddocks, the Diocesan Stewardship Officer

Not having had a conventional church upbringing, much of my time at theological college whilst training for ordination, was spent in a state of semi-confusion. I didn't have the vocabulary of many of my fellow students and it wasn't unusual for me to arrive at the first of a series of lectures with very little idea of what they were going to be about. I remember that 'Christology' was one of these occasions.

Little did I realise that it was utterly simple and utterly profound. Summed up in just one question, the question from today's gospel, which Jesus asks his closest disciples, 'Who do you say that I am?'

If you, like me, have ever wondered if you are a 'proper Christian' this is the question that you need to answer. Jesus begins by asking the disciples, 'What's the gossip? What are people saying about me? Who do they say that I am?'

The disciples are happy enough to answer that question. It's a head question, a knowledge question, an interesting enough question.

But the tone changes completely when Jesus asks them, 'And you, who do you say that I am?'

Now, this is personal, and it needs to be personal for us too.

Who is Jesus to me?

Who is Jesus to you?

Peter's reply to the question is 'You are the messiah, son of the living God'

Too easily we allow these words to just wash over us in a kind of 'yeah, we know that, kind of way'.

Do we?

Do we know what it means to call Jesus 'Messiah'? To call Jesus 'saviour' or 'liberator'

You can only claim Jesus as Messiah, as your Messiah, if you have a sense of what you have been saved or liberated from, if you have a sense that because of Jesus you live in freedom when otherwise you would be a slave.

To what would you be enslaved? What is it that Jesus liberates you from? These are questions that can answer for you, and that you need to keep answering on a daily basis.

It can be tempting to say that I am liberated from sin, but what is sin? To give the answer 'doing the wrong thing' sets the bar too low for most of us. Most of us were brought up to not do the wrong thing and most of the time we manage to stick to this. Does that mean that we don't sin? For me, sin is falling short of the will of God, doing other than that which God would, for my own sake, have me do. Against this measure I constantly fall short. Against this measure I am burdened with the constant sense of failure and it is from this that Jesus is my liberator.

My daughter is currently buying her first flat. Unfortunately, with just a week to go, her first purchase fell through. She was bitterly disappointed. Another round of house hunting and she made another offer and that seems to be going ok. For a couple of weeks, I kept asking her how this or that compared to the one that she had lost until she got fed up of me and said 'will you please stop comparing'? I like the one I am buying, it has nothing to do with the other one, let me just get on with it!

That was mum told! And of course she was right. It was a clean slate, what had come before didn't matter.

So it is with Jesus. Every day I am the beloved, the one he wants to know, spend time with and encourage into wholeness. My mistakes of

yesterday belong in yesterday. They might inform today but they don't belittle today. The slate is clean.

Jesus is my messiah. He is the son of the living God, one with God. He is God and yet visible, understandable, relatable.

Friend, companion, guide, advocate. Words that slowly, gradually, cautiously I have come to own.

Over time I have come to a greater understanding of what it means to me, personally, to name Jesus as my saviour. Gradually, I have grown in the sense that I owe him every day, that without his love and healing of me, my life would be diminished to a daily wrestle with the blackness that is the alternative, the blackness of lack of meaning and hope. The words 'all good things come from you' flow through me and orientate me. Every moment of joy and consolation become the song of his presence and every moment of despair and brokenness can be handed over to be restored in hope.

What words do you choose to say to Jesus when he turns to you and says 'who do you say that I am?'

Notices

Tuesday Eucharist

Please note that there will be no BCP Communion at St John's this Tuesday, 25 August. The service will resume as normal on the following Tuesday, 1 September.

Ride and Stride 2020

This year's Ride and Stride will be on Saturday, 12 September. Philip Evans has devised a programme which combines visiting the churches with a day retreat and worship. For further details, please see the websites or contact Philip.

New Service Pattern

Assuming no new lockdowns or restrictions, the new Sunday service pattern will be introduced from September. In summary, this is as follows.

St John's	10.30am, Eucharist on 1 st , 3 rd and 4 th Sundays, All Age Worship on 2 nd Sunday
St Michael's	10.30am, Eucharist on 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd Sundays, Morning Prayer on 4 th Sunday
St Clement's	9.30am, Morning Prayer on 1 st and 3 rd Sundays, Eucharist on 2 nd and 4 th Sundays
St David's	4pm, Eucharist on 1 st and 3 rd Sundays, Evening Prayer on 2 nd and 4 th Sundays