

7th After Trinity

Genesis 15:1-6 Psalm 50:1-17 Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 Luke 12: 32-40

In speaking and listening, may God be known, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

“Do not be afraid” Jesus begins today’s gospel with these fundamental words of reassurance.

I read somewhere that such words appear 365 times throughout the Bible: one for everyday of the year.

I wonder how our prayers and our lives might be transformed if we were to make space to hear God speaking these words to us at the start of everyday.

Do not be afraid....because it is God’s delight to give you the kingdom – to give you life as God wills it, the life for which each one of us was created.

Our starting assumptions can be that God delights in us, and that God delights in giving us all that we are and will be.

I’m lingering with this because I believe it is something we all need to linger with until we really believe it.

God delights in us.....and we are called to share that delight in the world.

It is coming into the experience of living as those who feel God’s delight in them that transforms the way we might hear and understand the rest of today’s gospel. So I’d encourage you, even if you don’t remember anything else about today’s words take away:

Do not be afraid, God delights in you

And remind yourself of it every morning.

Today Jesus offers us two reflections on what living as those who are not afraid and who know God’s delight in them might be like.

It will influence what we ultimately value.

As we experience God’s delight in us, we recognise the fullness of our delight in God, our love for God and all that God loves too.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be”

That in turn will shape how we use what is ours: sell your possessions and give alms.

Giving “alms”, sharing what we have been given by God so that all can have a fuller share in the wellbeing for which we are all created has always been a deeply linked with faith and worship (and is so across all world religions)

No doubt over the next months many of us will be reviewing our budgets – and with all that economists forecast, I know for many of us it is a source of anxiety.

This may be a time to pray for the grace to experience God’s assurance “Do not be afraid”

This grace is not about make believe security or magical lottery wins, but about a deeper grounding in the love that holds the world in being and holds us in life through all we experience.

This may also be a time to ask God to show us where our treasure is, and to notice how we use what we own. God promises us the kingdom, how might the way we give, spend and save be signs of the kingdom in our lives and the live of others.

How do we experience God’s delight in us in the way we use our money and possessions?

Do not be afraid.

Be dressed for action.....

I have to admit that initially the examples Jesus gives in the second part of today’s teaching set up an internal conflict in me.

I don’t know about you, but for me “being prepared” and being anxious are very closely related – it is often my anxiety that drives being over-prepared!

What difference does it make to remember that all today’s teaching begins with “Do not be afraid”?

What if those waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet are not on high alert because they will be in trouble if the master has to wait for someone to open the door, but because they can’t wait for his presence back in the house? What if it is the anticipation of the joy of his

company that prompts keeping lamps lit and an ear for the sounds of his arrival?

Can you think of a time when it is love that kept you alert?

Or the experience of someone excited by your visit watching out for you?

What if that is the way we look out for the signs of God's presence in our lives, in joyful anticipation of the companionship that it brings?

In Jesus' subversive parable here we see this joyful anticipation fulfilled. We see what it means not to be afraid because it is God's good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

Blessed are those slaves who the master find alert when he comes...he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat and he will come and serve them.

The presence of "the master" restores the relationships within this household to a companionship in which the delight of the master in his household is expressed in his free service to them.

Around this table shared delight in one another dissolves fear, dissolves the master/slave distinction and creates companionship.

Perhaps we are reminded of a real table – at which the one who shows us what God's is like, who his friends called Lord, the night before he was handed over to a slaves death, took the role of a slave knelt and washed their feet. One of the closest of them, Peter, struggled to see what was going on – struggled to see the presence of the God who delights in us showing us delight in gentle service and showing that such humble service can come from a place of love not compulsion. This is what the kingdom we are being given looks like.

In church today we come to a real table (or in our heart's vision to the spiritual table shared by the whole church), where the same Lord offers us the bread and the wine they all shared that night.

The one who invites us tells us

Do not be afraid

It is God's good pleasure to give you the kingdom

In communion we receive the foretaste of the banquet to which God invites everyone to sit down to eat, where shared delight has replaced any fear, and where companionship in love is fully established.

May we know God's delight in each one of us as we come to this table and in receiving may we be freed from fear so that in the week to come our lives may overflow with the generosity of God's love. Amen