

Sunday 28th June 2020

Call to worship

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Father, we offer to you, this day, all our thoughts, words and actions, all our sufferings and disappointments, and all our joys; and we unite our lives with that of your beloved Son Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Confession

Merciful God, we are sorry for our unfaithfulness to the love you show us by the gift of life and the greater gift of union with you through the grace of baptism. Lord, we beg you to forgive our sins and to heal the wounds that our sins have caused. We thank you, Lord, for your mercy that brought us to repent and for the forgiveness that you offer so freely when we truly repent.

(Silence)

Assurance of Pardon

The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon and remission of all your sins.

God of love, give us a heart to love you and to love one another; through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

Amen

New Testament Reading:

The Gospel of Matthew 7:1-5

¹Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ²For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", while the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.

This is the word of the Lord

Reflection

Self-righteousness is a very big problem in every society today, and even in our churches. Jesus attacks this attitude of some people by using a parable filled with humour. I can almost hear the giggles of Jesus' disciples as they try to imagine a person with a log (or a plank) in their eye! But, unfortunately, the issue of criticism is very real in our churches today as always. Maybe God is looking down on us and thinking that in all these years we have not learnt to live together as He meant for us to live together.

When one feels that they know better than others, and/or they fail to realise their flaws and mistakes, we see that these people are full of criticism for the people around them. Of course, they do, they know better than me and you. They analyse what you do and tell you how you can be better or do better. Not because you need correction but only because then you can better fit in their world. Because, unless you are just like them you fail to meet the standards; unless you do it the way they would do it, it's just not good enough. The worst thing is when **you** find yourself doing exactly the same as these "judges" of right and wrong. Judging others, criticising others, looking down on those who fail to meet your standards, and measuring them according to **your** understanding. Well, this is a sin. Jesus condemns this attitude, when we judge others unfairly and remain ignorant of our failings and flaws. Jesus is talking about our blindness to see ourselves for what we are when all others can see this arrogant

attitude in us. In verse 3 He clearly says that “*you do not notice the log in your own eye...*” Therefore, we are invited to reflect on who we are when we are measured by God.

When we surrender to God, truly surrender to Him, we find that our concern is to fit within His standards, not our own. Jesus is calling us to stop criticising others and focus on our ways, our flaws and our learning in relation to God’s will. If we keep our eyes on who we are with God, then we will be able to appreciate with love and grace the diversity of what others bring within the assembly of disciples that is the church. Be careful though, Jesus here is not saying that we must not discern what is right and wrong or what is good or bad. This passage is not about that; this passage is about criticism of other people. It calls us reflect with self-criticism before God every day so that we can live within God’s standards, within God’s will.

Those who kneel before God and pray to be moulded according to His will can stand before anyone. Therefore, the focus is to be honest and open to God about who we are and therefore appreciate others for who they are with all their ways. Let God judge them for who they are. You, Christian man or woman, are called to love them not judge them. Do not try to take God’s job, but surrender to His grace and ask God for guidance on the things that you are getting wrong. Don’t forget the words of Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...”. This is not about being terrified about God’s judgment on us but wanting to meet His standards because we understand His love for us. It is fear to fail the One who loves us more than words can say. Therefore, Jesus is calling his disciples to form their identities on God’s measure, not our own. Then, we will learn to love others as ourselves.

Amen

Hymn : Click [here](#) to enjoy the hymn “All to Jesus, I surrender” by Robin Mark

Prayer of Intercession:

God of all comfort, in this time of distress and grief, we have come to tell you our sorrow, and to rest ourselves within the circle of your love.

Lord, we lift before you those who suffered and suffer in health because of the pandemic, we lift before you those who are suffering the economic consequences of this crisis. Help us all, Lord, to redesign the society we live in, so that it may reflect

more and more a community of your love and your grace, where no one wants more and everyone has what they need.

Lord, you have created humankind in such beauty. Each one of us is unique and beautiful in your eyes, and yet some of us use those differences as a reason to hate and divide between races, nations or cultures.

Help us all, Lord, to see the beauty of your creation through your eyes. So that we can be united in our diversity, celebrate our differences and give glory to you Lord for the beauty of all humankind. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

The Lord's prayer

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen

Benediction:

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini