

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 29 June 2025 - The Second Sunday after Trinity

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

2 Kings 2.1-2, 6-14; Psalm 77.1-2, 11-end [or 77.11-end], Galatians 5.1, 13-25; Luke 9.51-end

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by Dr Mel Eyeons, LLM, St Bene't's, Cambridge**

Today's gospel reading is not an easy one. It's a reading that contains prejudice and threats of violence by the disciples, and strong words about being half-hearted from Jesus.

The reading comes at the end of a series of events which show that Jesus's followers still had a lot to learn. They had failed to heal a boy with seizures. They had once again not understood when Jesus told them he had to die. They had argued among themselves about which one was the greatest. And they had tried to stop someone performing exorcisms because he didn't belong to their group. Now, Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem to face his death, and his way takes him through a Samaritan village.

Samaria was located in what is now the northern half of the West Bank, a place both then and now of deep, complex and bitter divisions. Although the Jews and Samaritans had common roots and a shared ancestry, they were divided by a range of religious, political and racial issues. The most important of these issues was about the location of the holiest site in the world, and therefore where everyone should go to worship God. The Jews believed this was the Temple Mount in Jerusalem while the Samaritans believed it was Mount Gerizim, in Samaria. This led to hostility and even violence on both sides, especially towards people heading for Jerusalem.

Given the history between Jews and Samaritans, and Jesus's destination, it's not surprising that the village Jesus was heading for refused to have him. The reaction of James and John, two of Jesus's Jewish followers, was also not surprising. The Jewish people tended to feel superior to the Samaritans and these two were probably quite pleased to have this chance to attack the inferior Samaritan enemy. After all, the Samaritans were rejecting the Messiah on his way to Jerusalem, and what could be more worthy of righteous indignation than that?

What would have surprised James and John, though, was Jesus's reaction to their suggestion of raining down fire from heaven to destroy the village. Instead of getting praise for attacking the enemies of Israel, the two followers find themselves being told off, and Jesus simply goes another way. We don't know what exactly Jesus said to James and John, but we can imagine that it was something along the lines of, "that's not how we do things. Love your enemies, don't attack them. Have you learned nothing?"

These two followers are not alone in their failure, though. We sadly don't have to look very hard to see division and hatred in our own world. We see it in news stories about wars, terrorism, violence against people of a different background or sexuality, and gang conflicts. We see it on the internet, where some seem to delight in setting out to be as hateful and divisive as possible. We see it in our politics, where people of different political views are finding it harder to talk to one another as positions become more hardline. We see it in neighbourhoods where those who are different in some way are treated with suspicion, fear and hatred. We see it in homes when people fail to treat one another with love and respect, and care is replaced with contempt, neglect or abuse. Sadly, we even see it among followers of Jesus when we reject other Christians for being different from us and forget to love the world as God loves it.

The tendency to divide people into groups is a very human one, and it's not always bad. Sometimes it can be helpful if it means, for example, that a group of people with particular needs get those needs met. But it can easily turn into an 'us against them' approach that causes painful effects going on for generations. We can all see the tragic results of division and violence. Refugees are forced to flee their homes. Families and communities are destroyed. Lives are weighed down by unresolved trauma. And everywhere there are ongoing cycles of finger pointing and self-justification.

Yet, this is not Jesus's way. His commands are clear: love your enemies, pray for those who hate you, do good to those who want to harm you. There's no room for exceptions. No space for 'but' or 'what if' or 'surely not them'. Love God and love your neighbour as yourself, Jesus says, a message driven home in another story featuring enemies – the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

Now, in saying this, we should be clear that it doesn't mean accepting any old behaviour from other people for the sake of keeping the peace. A phrase I like is that 'some people are best loved from a distance'. I don't believe that God wants us to put up with violence or abuse. We do have every right to remove ourselves from people who mean us harm and to ensure justice is done. Neither should people be pressured into forgiving before they're ready. Healing takes time, it takes work to heal divisions, and everyone's journey is different. We can be sure that God knows and understands where we are in that journey.

But what we do have here is a call to stop the cycle of hatred and revenge in our own lives, to call a halt to pointless tit-for-tat behaviour that just makes things worse. It's a call to give up grudges, prejudices and feuds. It's a call to end all the ways in which we justify looking down on others, refusing to love them, and excluding them.

As I said at the beginning, this is not an easy gospel reading. The first followers of Jesus found it hard to grasp what Jesus was asking of them, and things are no easier for us now. It takes wholehearted commitment and determination to follow in Jesus's footsteps and love one another in the way he loves us. This is why Jesus seems so harsh on those who want to follow him in this reading. The reasons people give for not coming immediately are good, and Jesus seems unreasonable in reacting as he does. Yet, we can see this as Jesus using strong language to make a point about what's most important. Burying your father was an important religious duty – but Jesus says even religious duties and rituals are not as

important as following him. Saying goodbye to your family is a very human instinct – but Jesus asks us to be prepared to leave everything behind if that's what he needs of us.

As followers of Jesus, we are on a long journey of growth and change, and we can't expect to become perfect disciples in this lifetime, let alone overnight. We face a challenging prospect, and alone it is a potentially overwhelming one. But it's not a journey we go on alone or without help. For one thing, we travel with our brothers and sisters, to encourage, support, love and challenge us.

And we go with Jesus himself, who has gone this way before, knows what we are facing, and loves us to the end – no matter how many times we misunderstand, get things wrong or falter along the way. And as we go, we will find more and more freedom from bitterness, anger and old hurts. We will find new peace within ourselves. We will find new ways of bringing peace to our homes and communities. We may even find that peace spreads wider than we ever thought possible and brings resolution to apparently hopeless divisions and conflicts.

So, despite all the challenges we face, let us go with hope and love to follow our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

### ***Ways to Engage all Generations***

When different generations are gathered together in worship there is an opportunity to build relationships and to encounter God in our conversations as we build relationships and learn from each other no matter what our ages, stage of life or faith and for all present to feel included. Adding some wondering questions to the service at an appropriate moment can help to do this.

**Wondering Questions:** Some wondering questions that may help to engage all generations to ponder and explore during the talk, service or during the week may include (three or so) of the following style of questions:

- I wonder what your favourite part of the story/passage is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder who your favourite character is? I wonder why that is?
- I wonder how \_\_\_\_\_ felt or I wonder how \_\_\_\_\_ felt when \_\_\_\_\_ happened?
- I wonder how you feel about \_\_\_\_\_?
- I wonder where you are in this story?
- I wonder what part of the story is about you?
- I wonder what the [tree, pearl, coin] could really be?
- I wonder why \_\_\_\_\_ said \_\_\_\_\_?
- I wonder what we can learn about God in this story?

### ***Suggested intercessions***

Lord, you challenge our hardness of heart and call us to commit ourselves wholeheartedly to you. We give thanks for all who help us to follow in your way and ask you to inspire all

your Church to follow your way of love and service. Strengthen and heal us so that we may meet the challenges that lie ahead with confidence and peace and reassure us of your forgiveness and help when we struggle.

Lord, you have called us.

**Make us worthy of our calling.**

Lord, you challenged division and the use of violence. Give to all leaders of nations and peoples a new willingness to listen to others, to seek peace and reconciliation, and a desire to end cycles of violence, fear and revenge across the world. We give thanks for all who work for peace and speak truth to power in the service of humanity and ask that you bless them in their efforts. May all people reach past the barriers we so often put up to discover our common humanity.

Lord, you have called us.

**Make us worthy of our calling.**

Lord, you know how fear and ignorance can so often lead to hatred and violence. Bring healing and togetherness to all our communities, so that we may grow to understand one another better, break down prejudice, and increase our love for others. Bless and help those who work to serve our communities and make our lives together better for all. May all our homes, schools and places of work be filled with your loving-kindness.

Lord, you have called us.

**Make us worthy of our calling.**

Lord, you came to bring healing and help to those in need. Pour out your compassion on all who suffer, in body, mind or spirit. Be present also with all those who care for loved ones and friends, and bring them support, strength and hope. We ask for your protection on those suffering because of war, violence, injustice, or persecution, and for your comfort and reassurance for those living with fear or distress. Hear our cry and be merciful to those who are in need.

Lord, you have called us.

**Make us worthy of our calling.**

Lord, you give new life to those who trust in you. Deal tenderly with those who are dying and gather them to you in your mercy. Comfort those who mourn loved ones and bring them new hope. We also ask for your compassionate care for those who grieve for lost opportunities, those who long for what cannot be, and for those who mourn what might have been. When our time on earth is over, bring us all to be with you for ever.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

***Suggested hymns/songs***

Be thou my vision

Dear Lord and Father of mankind

For the healing of the nations

From heaven you came

In Christ there is no east or west

Jesus Christ is waiting

O Jesus, I have promised

Thou didst leave thy throne

When God Almighty came to earth

Will you come and follow me

***Activities to accompany the service***

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@lectionary resource)