

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 29 September 2024 - The Eighteenth 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)

Numbers 11. 4-6 and 10-16 and 24-29; Psalm 19.7-end; James 5.13-end; Mark 9. 38-end

## **Homily**

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Canon Dr Robert Mackley, Incumbent - Vicar, St Mary the Less, Cambridge**

Most of us have at home if not an actual physical written list, then at least a list in our heads of things we keep meaning to do. Whether it is putting up some shelves, clearing out the shed or using up the contents of the tins at the back of the cupboard, life just seems to get in the way and weeks and months – years even – pass without us doing them. The list, if anything, gets longer.

Occasionally, the omissions are rather more serious, and we meant to write to someone only to find they have died before we made contact, or we meant to pay a debt and didn't and now find we owe a lot of money. Some of our failures have bigger consequences than an unused and now mouldy and unusable item at the bottom of the fridge.

Sometimes the only way things get done is by a shock, by a change of routine or an unexpected experience that makes us sit up and actually take control of our lives.

Jesus in today's Gospel is giving us just such a shock, shaking us awake when he says if your hand, foot, or eye causes you to stumble then cut it off or tear it out. It's pretty blunt language from our Lord but he knows that sometimes only pretty blunt language will work.

We can go on with a situation that we know to be wrong for a very long time because changing it is a faff, might upset people and requires time and attention that is presently taken up with just getting through the week. Most of us, if we take a moment, can think of some situation like that in our lives.

Yet Jesus today is reminding us that carrying on with things that are wrong, that are sinful in some way, is a serious matter. Even if we aren't aware of it, it damages us, our relationships with people and, of course, with God. Our lives and how we live them matter. We matter.

Our Lord speaks first of our hand. The hand is the way we reach out and touch things and people. Do we touch in love and support, with gentleness and with thought or do we grasp and try to possess, are we rough and aggressive? Do we use our hands to lead others to serve God or to lead others to serve me? Our hands are what we use to hold, to receive Holy Communion, after all – we should ask ourselves if they are used the rest of the time in a way that's worthy of how we use them in church?

Next Jesus turns to our feet. It's with our feet that we set out on a journey, that we go in one direction or another. Again, he is asking us: what is our direction in life, where are choosing to go? Am I allowing myself to walk down a cul-de-sac, to take an avenue that leads merely to money or status or pleasure and nothing truly noble? Is someone else forcing my feet along a path I know to be wrong? If so, then I must stop, and stop abruptly. To cut off the foot means no longer to be able to walk in that direction. For if we don't take drastic surgery, we may find eventually that it is too late.

And lastly, the Lord talks of the eye. With our eye we can take in the beauty of a church building, the glory of a sunset, the vulnerability of a new-born baby, the joy of a job well done. But we can also look with envy, lust, and greed at someone's life on Instagram, a person we see in the shop or any other part of God's creation; things that are given us by God to be enjoyed but not possessed, ravaged, denuded, or denied to others.

It's an old-fashioned question but one worth asking: what are the occasions for sin in our lives? Is there a person, an app on our phone perhaps, a time of day, a mood we indulge may be that leads nowhere good?

Well today Jesus tells us that if so, we must take action because our life and death is impacted by how we think in small and significant ways. He's not telling us physically to chop off a hand that steals or gouge out an eye that envies – he's just trying to get our attention – but he is telling us spiritually to do so, which in practice is not a lot easier than actually maiming ourselves!

He begins today by saying simply and generously, 'Whoever is not against us is for us; whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you are a Christian will not lose their reward.' He starts with good news. The rewards of the Christian faith, even (it seems) of sympathy towards a church and faith you don't necessarily yourself share, are great.

But so are the dangers of not doing so. The message of the gospel today is to awake from a sleep-walk through life, awake from the idea that nothing matters very much, and everything will be fine. Every day we can decide for or against what is good, true, and beautiful and every day that decision matters. Because we matter. Let us this week then ask God into our lives afresh to do with us a little MOT: of our hands, our feet and our eyes and make sure they are touching, walking, and seeing the right way, the right path, the true and glorious vision. Then we truly will have salt in ourselves and be at peace. Amen.

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***

In faith, hope and union of Spirit with our Lord, let us pray to the Father:

‘If your hand causes you to stumble cut it off.’ Heavenly Father, hear us as we pray for grace to use our hands, feet and eyes for your glory and the service of your people. Grant us to touch, walk and see with love, that with Dagmar our Acting Bishop and all your whole church we may journey towards your kingdom.

Lord in your mercy...

‘Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another.’ Almighty God, hear us as we pray for the peace of the world, that peoples and nations, in their rich and salty diversity may learn to love and appreciate one another and so live at peace. We name in your gracious presence this day...as places in especial need of your grace.

Lord in your mercy...

‘Whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will not lose their reward.’ Gracious God, hear us as we pray for those who are glad the church is there, who support us as Christians and who work with us in the community but are not yet Christians. May they know your love ever more powerfully and be drawn to you.

Lord in your mercy...

‘No one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.’ Loving Lord, hear us as we pray for those in any kind of need, whether of body, mind, spirit, or estate. Do we pray a deed of power in their lives that they may know healing and restoration and come to praise you for your goodness. Among those who suffering we hold up to you...

Lord in your mercy...

'For everyone will be salted with fire.' Everlasting God, we recall in your presence all who have passed through the ordeal of death. May they, cleansed in the fire of your love, know the bliss of your presence, and grant us, we pray, one day to share with them in your kingdom. We remember particularly...who have died recently and...whose anniversaries of death fall at this time.

Lord in your mercy...

We are you little ones who believe in you, O God. Unite us with your church on earth and in heaven and hear us as we commend the whole creation to your endless love: **Merciful Father...**

### **Suggested hymns/songs**

From the *Celebration Hymnal for Everyone*:

- 166 Father we come to you
- 212 God has chosen me
- 269 How shall they hear the word of God
- 732 This is my will, my one command
- 769 We are one in the Spirit

From the *New English Hymnal*:

- 138 Come Holy Ghost
- 374 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
- 383 Jesu, lover of my soul
- 389 Jesus, these eyes have never seen
- 445 Rock of ages, cleft for me
- 484 The Church's one foundation

### **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](http://reflectionary.org) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](http://engageworship) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material

- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@lectionary resource)