

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 7 July 2024 - The Sixth Sunday of 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)

Ezekiel 2. 1-5; Psalm 123; 2 Corinthians 12. 2-10; Mark 6.1-13

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by Mrs Mel Eyeons, LLM, The Paxtons with Diddington and Southoe (Benefice)**

I wonder if you've ever noticed how the people who know you best don't always take you seriously? Think of family gatherings. Perhaps it's Christmas dinner and you're a fully grown-up person with a job and responsibilities, and maybe a family of your own. Still, though, they bring up that time you lost your schoolbag when you were 7, and you're taken back to childhood. The same can happen with old friends. The same person who saw you staying out late partying in your 20s might find it hard to take you seriously as a more settled, respectable person at a later date.

I think something similar was happening in today's gospel story. Jesus was surrounded by people who'd known him all his life. They'd seen him as a teething baby, an unsteady toddler, a child running about, getting under everyone's feet, and as a moody adolescent. He'd always been just one more local lad, but now he was announcing that he was more than that. Who did he think he was? Did he think he was better than them and the place he grew up in? No wonder they were upset by him. I wonder how Jesus felt about that?

And there seems to be a connection between his hometown's lack of belief and Jesus's ability to work miracles there. Now, obviously God's power doesn't depend on how much we believe, or we'd all be in trouble. All people of faith have times of doubt and struggle, and all of us have things we find it harder to believe. Yet, there was something stopping Jesus from showing God's power there, and I wonder if it has more to do with respect than lack of ability.

Despite God's unlimited power and authority, we know that he doesn't force us to respond to him. We know that God is love, and calls, hopes, and longs for us. And we know that you can't force a person to react to you in the way you'd like and still have a loving relationship. That's control and manipulation, not love and care. This can be frustrating, worrying, or even alarming, but it's true: you can't force someone to love you any more than you can force the sun to rise earlier or later. And you can't force someone to take what you're offering and expect them to want it, either, however good it might be for them. A gift has to be freely offered and freely taken to mean anything good.

Our God-given human freedom to decide whether or not to love and whether or not to choose goodness is both a blessing and a problem for us. On the one hand, it means we have dignity and respect. But on the other hand, it means we can reject what we need most. In today's gospel the tragedy is that Jesus's neighbours chose to reject what they most needed – God's salvation and healing. And as surprised and probably hurt as Jesus was, he respected their decision and didn't force his gifts onto them.

I wonder what this tells us about how we should treat others? Dealing with other people can be difficult. Sometimes they just won't agree that what we've decided is right and the best thing for them. In our increasingly divided society this is becoming more and more of a problem. We see people take up positions and defend them from behind higher and higher walls, instead of trying to learn from each other, respect different opinions, and find common ground.

But it can also be a problem in the Church. When we come across Christians who have different ideas about faith it's easy to dismiss them as simply wrong or try to force them into agreeing with us. Difference can be challenging and unsettling, and we may believe that complete agreement is the only way to peace and harmony. But as well as being unlikely to work, this isn't the way that Jesus shows us. He was open to discussion and debate with those who wanted it, but he wasn't going to force people to see things his way. They could choose to have nothing to do with him and go on their way, convinced they were right. In the same way, although we do need to call out things that are obviously wrong or harmful, we aren't called to make sure everyone in the Church thinks the same. Rather, our job is to love, accept and even celebrate the good things about our differences as all bringing something new and unique to God's kingdom.

There's also something important in this passage about how we share and explain our faith to others. Jesus sends his followers out to spread his message in this gospel passage. But he also tells them that if people don't want to listen, they are to move on and try somewhere else. Jesus does not tell us to hit people over the head with the gospel and make them listen. He recognises that people have a choice, and their choice has to be respected, even if this is mistaken. It can be frustrating when we know the importance and goodness of what we're trying to offer others, but as Rowan Williams has said, "There is no power that can force the human heart". We can only do our part by living out our faith and being open to opportunities to share what we believe when people are interested. For the rest, we can only trust that God is at work in some way, gently changing hearts and minds through love and persistence, not through power and force.

### ***Suggested intercessions***

Blessed are you, Lord God, giver of life and light.  
We thank you that you sent Jesus to live among us.  
Help us to share in his mission,

pass on the message of the Gospel with love and respect,  
and show acts of mercy that reveal God's love.  
We ask you to bless all who lead us in our ministry,  
and to strengthen us when we are discouraged by rejection or failure.

Lord, hear us:

**show us your loving kindness.**

We remember all who are suffering under tyranny and oppression,  
and those whose freedom is taken away from them,  
whether by governments or by others around them.  
We ask your blessing on all who work to bring freedom to captives,  
and justice to those who suffer.  
Give courage and strength to those who strive for freedom, peace and security,  
may your peace and justice fill all the world.

Lord, hear us:

**show us your loving kindness.**

We give thanks for our homes and loved ones, our friends and our neighbours.  
May our communities be sensitive to the needs of others,  
and quick to help without blame or judgement.  
We ask for greater willingness to listen and understand between all sections of society.

Lord, hear us:

**show us your loving kindness.**

We give thanks that you care for us, in body mind, and spirit.  
We remember [in a moment of quiet] all who suffer,  
and pray especially for those who feel nobody listens or cares,  
and for those who are rejected or overlooked.

Lord, hear us:

**show us your loving kindness.**

We rejoice in the Good News of eternal life.  
We remember in your presence those who have gone before us from this life  
into your eternal kingdom.  
We share with them in the fellowship of all your people  
and commend them, ourselves and all of creation to your unfailing love.

**Merciful Father...**

### ***Suggested hymns/songs***

All hail the power of Jesus' name  
Forth in the peace of Christ we go  
God moves in a mysterious way

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy  
O love, how deep, how broad, how high  
One more step along the world I go  
Songs of thankfulness and praise

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

An idea from “Prayer and Prayer and Prayer Activities” (Roots):

Cut pieces of paper into stone shapes and write on them the following words: Prayer, Bible reading, The Holy Spirit, Going to church, Learning from others. Leave some stones blank. Set the stones out as a path. Ask the group to divide into pairs and look at the stepping stones together. Invite them to walk along the stepping-stone path. When they come to a stone with words on, ask them to consider how God helps them to share the good news. When they get to a blank stone they write on it something that might help with their mission.