

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 5 October 2025 - The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity (Homelessness Sunday)

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)

Habakkuk 1.1-4; 2.1-4; Psalm 37.1-9; 2 Timothy 1.1-14; Luke 17.5-10

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Reverend Kristian Hewett, Bishop's Advisor for Homelessness and Assistant Curate - Associate Priest, The Good Shepherd, Chesterton Benefice

Have you ever wondered if you have “enough” faith?

Have you ever thought to yourself “if only I had *more* faith, I would be a ‘real’ or ‘more loving’ or ‘better’ Christian”?

If so, let me assure you, you aren't the only one. I've had these thoughts, the chances are others in your church have and - on the evidence of today's gospel reading - the disciples did too.

In the verses just before this passage from Luke 17, Jesus has told his disciples they need to be ready to forgive those who repent, time and time again.

Now that's a tall order. To be ready to forgive people *again and again*? That's going to take some special gift of character.

So the disciples cry out

“Lord, increase our faith!”

Wisely, the disciples know that faith is the unique ingredient that will help them to live up to the task Jesus calls them to. So they want to get their hands on enough of this “faith” thing as they can.

I wonder if they're thinking along these lines....

“If only we had the right amount of faith, then we could know we were doing right by God. Then we’d know we’d be able to forgive like he asks us to. Then we’d know we’d be in his good books, forever!”

But of course, faith doesn’t work like that.

Faith is an example of an “abstract noun” - one of those wonderful, mysterious things in life that you can’t quantify or put a figure on. Like “love”, “hope” or “courage.” It makes the world go round, but you can’t order in an exact weight of it!

And like with “love”, “hope”, “courage” and other such invisible but essential things, *the key is having faith, not counting or measuring it.*

Jesus reminds the disciples of this with his playful answer:

“If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, “Be uprooted and planted in the sea”, and it would obey you.

His point is not that the disciples need to have “bigger” faith, or “more faith”, because even the tiniest bit is powerful enough to uproot and move trees!

His point is that faith in him is enough.

They issue is not “how much” faith we have, but “who” we have faith in.

If, like me and like the disciples today, you sometimes ask yourself those questions we began with about whether you have “enough faith”, Jesus’ response is confident, clear and calming.

“Your faith in me itself is enough, my beloved, don’t worry, continue trusting in me.”

Today’s gospel passage is an invitation to be less preoccupied by “how much faith” we have. It’s an invitation to be bold in **who** we have faith in.

This understanding of the first part of the passage helps us to make a lot more sense of the second.

Here, Jesus gives an example of a master not giving special treatment to a slave who has done his duty. (It's an illustration rooted in the language and culture of the time, where slavery was commonplace, it's by no means condoning or supporting slavery today.)

If we're preoccupied by having bigger and more impressive "amounts" of faith, we're in danger of wanting or expecting special treatment from God.

To continue the metaphor Jesus uses, we might find ourselves ploughing or tending the sheep out in the field *extra hard*, and coming back expecting God to say to us, "come here at once and take your place at the table" (v.7)

But that's not how faith works. It's not a competition where we try to impress God. It's about trusting (i.e. having faith!) as we patiently and humbly do the godly work set before us, without wanting a reward, special treatment or a better review than others (compare this with the older brother in Luke 15!)

As Christians, the point isn't to impress or prove ourselves to God. The point is to humbly and gratefully do our business so we can say with contented hearts at the end of each day - and at the end of our lives - :

"We are worthless [yet beloved and precious!] slaves [i.e. children of God]; we have done only what we ought to have done!"

As it's Homelessness Sunday, you might wonder how this links to homelessness.

Well, homelessness is caused and prolonged not only by material poverty, but also poverty of relationship and poverty of identity.

(Ref: <https://gracetruth.blog/2019/05/14/homelessness-is-more-than-houselessness-re-thinking-kindness-3/>)

What this means is that tackling homelessness isn't *just* about providing more houses, food and money. It's also about establishing community, support and healthy, loving bonds with and around a vulnerable person; and co-creating a sense of agency, purpose, self-worth within them.

If someone is struggling with addiction, it can feel like they have a mountain to climb.

As someone told me recently, “it seems like I’m destined to a life of homelessness and addiction.”

If we make our churches competitive places - places of “more”, “bigger” and “better” faith - where does that leave the person above? How far off having “enough” faith must they feel? I wonder if they’d even bother to start the journey of faith...

Thank God that we have Jesus’ teaching today, reminding us that *having* faith is the key thing, and that even a flicker of faith can be enough to begin a journey of transformation.

This Homelessness Sunday, let us pray that we all might appreciate how precious the gift of faith is, and let us encourage it in one another. For even faith the size of a mustard seed can turn the world upside down.

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

(Based on words from the Iona Community)

Let us pray for the breaking-in of God's kingdom in our world today.

Lord God, because Jesus has taught us to trust you in all things,
we hold to his word and share his plea;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

For the worldwide church..... For our Bishop Dagmar...
For this Church ...
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where nations budget for war,
while Christ says 'put up your sword';
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where countries waste food and covet fashion.
While Christ says 'I was hungry...! was thirsty';
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where Christians seek the kingdom in the shape of their own church,
as if Christ had come to build barriers,
not break them down;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where women who speak up for their dignity
are treated with scorn or contempt;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where men try hard to be tough
because they are afraid to be tender;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where we, obsessed with being adult,
forget to become like children;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where there is illness and dis-ease, rejection and hurt;
.... bring healing
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where there is sorrow and bereavement Lord of hope and life;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Where our prayers falter, our faith weakens and our light grows
dim,
Lord of faithfulness and constant love;
your kingdom come, **your will be done.**

Lord God. You have declared that your kingdom is among us.
Open our ears to hear it, our hands to serve it, our hearts to hold
it.
Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!
unnumbered blessings, give my spirit voice;
tender to me the promise of his word -
in God my Saviour shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his name!
make known his might, the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure, from age to age the same -
his holy name: the Lord, the Mighty one.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of his might!
powers and dominions lay their glory by;
proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to flight,
the hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of his word!
firm is his promise, and his mercy sure:
tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord

to children's children and for evermore.
(Timothy Dudley-Smith 1926-2024)

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase!

Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills;
land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak:

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray;
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,
cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing fields, scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams
plundered and poisoned our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed;
make us content with the things that we need.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray;
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame
until your justice burns brightly again;
until the nations learn of your ways,
seek your salvation and bring you their praise.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion we pray;
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain;
come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*
(Graham Kendrick 1950-)

If we claim to love our neighbours
while the hungry queue for food,
are we prey to self-deception,
is perception quite so crude?

If we sit beside our neighbours,
begging for the things they need,
we might share their own injustice
in a world that thrives on greed.

If we punish those with nothing,
blaming them for where they stand,
is this love of friend or neighbour,
do we still not understand?
Love of neighbour is not easy,
cuts us till we feel the pain,
sharing hurt that they are feeling
till they find new life again.

Love of neighbour sets us squarely
in the place where they now sit,
till the richness God has given
builds a pearl around the grit;
till each person shares the comfort
of the love of which we preach,
till we live as fact the Gospel:
none can be beyond love's reach.
Words: Andrew Pratt (1948-)
Music: Arthur Sullivan (1842-1900)

Heaven shall not wait
for the poor to lose their patience,
the scorned to smile, the despised to find a friend:
Jesus is Lord;
He has championed the unwanted;
in him injustice confronts its timely end.

Heaven shall not wait
for the rich to share their fortunes,
the proud to fall, the elite to tend the least:
Jesus is Lord;
He has shown the master's privilege -
to kneel and wash the servants' feet before they feast.

Heaven shall not wait
for the dawn of great ideas,
thoughts of compassion divorced from cries of pain:
Jesus is Lord;
He has married word and action;
his cross and company make his purpose plain.

Heaven shall not wait
for triumphant Hallelujahs,
when earth has passed and we reach another shore:

Jesus is Lord
in our present imperfection;
his power and love are for now and then for evermore.
(John Bell 1949-)

Christ's is the world in which we move,
Christ's are the folk we're summoned to love,
Christ's is the voice which calls us to care,
And Christ is the one who meets us here.

*To the lost Christ shows his face;
to the unloved he gives his embrace;
to those who cry in pain or disgrace,
Christ makes with his friends, a touching place.*

Feel for the people we most avoid,
Strange or bereaved or never employed;
feel for the women, and feel for the men
who fear that their living is all in vain.

Feel for the parents who've lost their child,
feel for the women whom men have defiled,
feel for the baby for whom there's no breast,
and feel for the weary who find no rest.

Feel for the lives by life confused,
riddled with doubt, in loving abused;
feel for the lonely heart, conscious of sin,
which longs to be pure but fears to begin.

Words: John L. Bell

Music: Dream Angus (Scottish Folk Song)

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown,
that they might lovely be.
O, who am I, that for my sake
my Lord should take frail flesh, and die?

He came from his blest throne,
salvation to bestow:
but men made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O, my Friend, my Friend indeed,
who at my need his life did spend!

Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing;

resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then 'Crucify!' Is all their breath,
and for his death they thirst and cry.

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he to suffering goes,
that he his foes from thence might free.

In life no house, no home,
my Lord on earth might have;
in death no friendly tomb
but what a stranger gave.
What may I say?
Heaven was his home;
but mine the tomb
wherein he lay.

Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine;
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine!
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could gladly spend.
(*Samuel Crossman 1623-1683*)

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.org/) - in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/> (weekly@lectionary resource)