

A Service for Sunday After Ascension

24 May 2020

Rev'd Canon Leigh Richardson – Sub-Dean and Precentor

On Sunday mornings after Easter when the BBC1 Sunday Worship Service does not come from St Davids Cathedral (the next on June 7), the clergy team will take turns to produce a short service of reading, reflection and prayers, which will be posted on YouTube and social media. They will also produce a written summary of the service, which can be shared with those who don't have access to the internet. Here is the edited version by Canon Leigh Richardson.

In today's gospel Jesus is in a difficult position, he will be arrested soon, be unfairly tried and crucified. He shows that he trusts God the Father by praying. Not that God will help him to escape trouble, but that God's love may be shown through what would happen. Not just for himself, but also his followers.

Jesus prays that he will glorify God *"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.*

The word 'glorify' refers to the visible, self-disclosure of God. God will be glorified when Jesus hung, dying on a cross. Not what we associate with the word 'glory'. God shows himself on the cross. As a God of love who loved the world so much he gave his only son to die and pay the price of the sins of the world. A God who would conquer sin and death. A God who works in a different way to the world who expected the Messiah to come in earthly glory and military might.

Jesus shows his authority, given by God to grant eternal life. ² *For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.*

But what is 'eternal life'. If it is just everlasting life, a life filled with conflict, sickness, disappointment, frustration, busyness, mourning and death it isn't a very attractive proposition. Jesus defines eternal life. ³ *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*

Eternal life is not about quantity but quality. The quality of life. A life lived in a right relationship with God the Father through His Son Jesus. This involves trusting in what Jesus has done for us on the cross. It involves trusting in the rule and power of God in a world that seems to be out of control.

One of the problems of Government is who to trust. Do you trust in the Prime minister's leadership? Or do you root for the opposition, now that there is one. Many of us will be familiar with this...

"To: Jesus, Son of Joseph Woodcrafter's Carpenter Shop Nazareth SA19 (because its close to Bethlehem Llangadog)

From: Jordan Management Consultants"

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.

The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully.

As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation, and comes without any additional fee.

It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.

We wish you every success in your new venture.

Sincerely, *Jordan Management Consultants*"

Jesus was to trust the government of the gospel and the early church to his disciples. You wouldn't have voted for them ! They would soon scatter and leave Jesus alone (16:31f). Peter, their headstrong leader would cowardly deny Jesus three times (18:15-27).

But they were given to Jesus by God, a definition of a believer. They would learn to truly understand and trust Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus prays for them. He prays for their protection so they might be united. *Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one.*

The message of the gospel, that unites humans to God, would depend upon the unity of the first disciples. This unity is to reflect the unity of God the Father and God the Son. It is to be bound by the gift of love, given by God who is the source of all love.

God calls us to trust in him when things are difficult and the way ahead seems without hope. He brings certain hope through the resurrection of Jesus and, by implication, our own resurrection. Like Jesus we are to trust in God. To relate to Him by prayer, individually and corporately. To trust in His rule and to love those he has chosen to tread the journey of faith alongside us.