

Sunday Scribbling's No.9 – The 7th Sunday of Easter

Lectionary readings¹ for today are;

Acts 1:6-14. Psalm 68:1-10, 32- 35. 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11. John 17:1-11.

This Sunday is the Sunday after Ascension Day (last Thursday), and both the seventh and last Sunday after Easter.

With the Ascension now behind us (figuratively speaking) and Pentecost immediately ahead of us in our Church calendar, it struck me how fortunate I have been to be shackled to my laptop during this enforced period of isolation. Yes, we have lost many things; but, if we have acted as wise virgins, we have also gained many things.

For me, the opportunity to Scribble my way from the beginning of Passiontide, through Easter, past the Ascension and onwards via Pentecost has been a very real privilege and probably something I would never have attempted without the full CV19 lock-down experience.

Unsurprisingly, today's biblical passages are packed full of meaning and heavily laden with 'gold plated' words. If you can grasp these, then the Christian word of 'hope' that we bandy about in doxology, preaching and prayer suddenly changes into "HOPE" as it carries both the promise of Jesus and the surety of God. It's a hook you certainly want to be able to hang your hat on.

And that's a super appropriate place to start today's Scribbling

***** John 17:1-11 *****

Before we look at today's text, it's important to set the scene and be aware that John 17 takes place prior to Jesus entering the Garden of Gethsemane in Chapter 18. It makes for remarkable reading as Jesus prays out loud to the Father in front of the disciples and gives us clear teaching of both His 'human' relationship with The Father, and, *His heavenly relationship with God* from the beginning of time.

It also clearly lets us know that Jesus came to earth with a Godly mission; **“I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.”** From these words we can be sure that Jesus was not some haphazard human from the cave dwelling Essen tribe who claimed to be a god; but God himself who became man for a reason.

By now, we know enough about Jesus to understand that there is always a reason for Him taking any course of action ... and of course this time is no different.

¹“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”

That statement sounds simple enough at first glance ... but what does 'Glorify' actually mean? It seems to me that we need to know what this means if we are to fully understand this passage. But unfortunately, as with so much that has been translated from ancient Hebrew to Greek; then into Latin and eventually into Olde English, the original nuances of sentences and actual meanings of words become confused and conflated. Sometimes even forgotten.

(As an aside, imagine that we are now in the year 4000AD and looking back at a 'modern' biblical

translation of 2000AD. What would you make of the words “Yo-bro”; “furlough” or “walkie talkie”. You get the translators challenge I’m sure.)

Back to today ... ‘Glory’ comes from the Greek word ‘Doxa’ which (of course) means slightly different things when used in different contexts. With a Strongs number of 1391 we learn it can mean any of the following according to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*².

GLORY [Heb. *’adderet* (Zec. 11:3); *tip’ārâ* (Isa. 4:2; 28:5; Est. 1:4; Ps. 96:6; Zec. 12:7; etc.); *š^ebî*—‘glory,’ ‘beauty’ (2 S. 1:19; Isa. 13:19; 24:16; Ezk. 20:6; etc.) *kābôd*, from *kābēd*—‘to be heavy,’ hence ‘wealth, honor, dignity, power,’ etc.; Aram *y^eqār* (Dnl. 7:14); *y^eqārā*’ (Dnl. 2:37); Gk. *dóxa*—‘reputation, fame, splendor, honor, praise, majesty,’ etc.]. A comprehensive term applicable to both men and God, reflecting such qualities as esteem, reputation, essential worth, prestige, fame, and honor. As used of God, it is deemed particularly appropriate for describing His moral uniqueness and grandeur as Lord of the universe.

From the above, you can see that it’s hard to focus on a single word to convey the ‘right’ meaning of ‘Glory’, but I’m sure we all get the overall gist of ‘magnificence, might and majesty’ as it might apply to God in all His forms. That said, don’t forget that we are trying to describe heavenly ‘magnificence, might and majesty’ with mere human words and that, I suggest, is probably impossible... at best.

Verse 1 of our reading is very interesting. Think back to last weeks Scribbling’s where I talked about the deep spiritual love that comes from a non-dualistic level when human and Godly ‘hearts’ meet in a truly Godly way. Here it seems to me that Jesus is asking God to do just that with Him as He gets ready to prepare for the Passion and then His return to God.

¹“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”

It’s almost as if Jesus is saying to God – “Meet me on the astral plane of love that we share so that I might reunite with you in glory”. And the reason for Jesus to speak out loud? Well, there can only be one reason - to teach us that we should be seeking to achieve a deep, meaningful and spiritual relationship with both God and Jesus where mutual love and understanding flows freely from one to the other.

Try and picture this analogy; a blob of mercury in a sealed in a glass test tube. As you tilt and shake it, the mercury splits for the briefest of moments; but then immediately comes together again; seamlessly; effortlessly. Always moving back and forth with the tilt of the tube as in the flow of life. Never tarnishing. Always one part seeking the other; constantly seeking to be ‘One’.

Verses 2 & 3 are equally mind blowing; **²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”**



“KERPOW³” – there it is in black and white a God given explanation of what eternal life actually is.

It’s not complicated, and the opportunity is open to everyone; but note the conditional word **“might”** in v2. It implies that something has to happen here on earth to gain eternal life, and that’s explained in v3 – **“that they know you”**.

Verse 5 is equally as powerful as it not only confirms that Jesus has been with God since time began, (an important theological point), but it also teaches us that Jesus is of Godly status;

“⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.”

And v6 is not only exceptionally revealing, but also highly instructive for a Christian soul.

⁶ “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.”

Read that again. Twice, or more, if you need to.

Did you pick up the fact that you belong to God and that Jesus is your portal IF God gives you to Jesus and you obey His word.

Now take a moment and think about your heart, or more precisely your soul; that part of you which is deeply spiritual; that part of you which is permanently and perfectly aligned with God. After a little thought it becomes clear that you need to give some time and space to God so that your soul can flourish and thereby become fully aligned with God.

Then you will be ready for Jesus to reveal the Kingdom to you.

“⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me.”

“Kerpow” ... again!

***** 1 Peter 4:12-14 & 5:6-11 *****

Today's 1 Peter readings are difficult to unravel - but let's have a go anyway and see why this passage has been aligned with John 17.

The 4:12-14 passage in the NIV carries the sub heading of “Suffering for being a Christian” ... hardly the greatest disciple recruiting punch line of all time! It therefore seems reasonable to assume that the Apostle Peter wants us to pick up some nuance; some special aspect of his teaching to help us on our Christian journey.

That said, ‘suffering’ is one of those extraordinarily difficult topics that we need to address sooner or later as it shows up throughout the Bible. But why is Peter talking about this now? And what relevance has this got for us in 2020?

Let's take a step back and put ourselves in the disciples position.

Jesus had ascended into heaven and Pentecost had come and gone leaving them with the arrival of the Holy Ghost just as Jesus had promised. The disciples were now ‘out and about’ teaching, healing and spreading the Word of God throughout the known world to both Jews and Gentiles alike.

How easy do you think their lives would have been?

No doubt they were still a little raw around the edges from the Crucifixion, Ascension (which probably felt like a second bereavement) and the exhilarating confusion of Pentecost. Who wouldn't be? But now, with the ink on their new certificates of Apostleship barely dry they are ‘out there’ spreading the

WORD and doing precisely as Jesus had prepared them to do. At best, that must have been incredibly difficult. More likely, almost impossible in such a hostile and violent world as it was then. How did they live? Where did they stay every night? Who paid for a new pair of sandals?

Suffering would have been a large part of the daily diet for both the Apostles and all the disciples.

So it's not surprising that Peter is encouraging them to align themselves with the glory of Jesus, His purpose and His achievements. Where else would you find the fortitude to continue as a disciple in such difficult conditions? They needed guidance to enable them to align themselves with the life experience of Jesus in the sure knowledge and belief that they too would benefit from resurrection into everlasting life.

And sadly, not a lot changed as the years went by. After 2000 years, 'suffering' in all its forms is alive and well in the world today.

- All the Apostles (except John) suffered and met their deaths in terrible circumstances;
- The Albigensians were wiped out in Southern France in the early 13th Century;
- In May 2019 the BBC carried a headline entitled "Christian persecution at near genocide levels"⁴;
- And our own Bishop Philip chaired a report in 2019 entitled " BISHOP OF TRURO'S INDEPENDENT REVIEW FOR THE FOREIGN SECRETARY OF FCO SUPPORT FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS"⁵. It's 136 pages and 718 references make very uncomfortable reading.

So, with some lateral thinking, one can see why the lectionary has paired these two readings. Sadly, Peter's Gospel advice not only remains as relevant today as the day it was written, but it also appends seamlessly to our John reading as being 'relevant for every Christian'.

In short, suffering, as you know, seems to be part of the general human life experience. How you deal with it as someone who is suffering, or as a person helping to relieve others who are suffering (e.g. Mother Theresa), seems to be part of the Christian mystery, never forgetting that whichever side of the fence you are on, love, faith and hope are key ingredients for success.

That's why it makes no difference if you are black or white; male or female; employed or unemployed; whole or broken. Love at whatever level you are capable of and belief in "**the only true God, and Jesus Christ**" will ensure that the Holy Ghost comes alongside you whether you are suffering or not.

And that's what makes a Christian unique. God has entrusted you with knowledge and a vision so that suffering **with Him** for the sake of others helps us to discover that God is not only rooting for us in a heavenly sense, but is with us right now, here on earth. The closer the kenotic experiences that we have with Jesus and fellow humans here on earth, the more we will realise that the Kingdom of Heaven is not only right here on earth, in the here and now, but also awaiting us in eternity.

And how has He done this?

Verse 22 explains; "²² **I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one.**"

Amen.

To finish a short prayer.

Let us pray ...

Lord, hear my prayer.

“At this happy and holy season help us to see that the real footprints of your ascension are not to be found upon a mountain-top near Jerusalem, but in the marks and tokens of the witness of your disciples here and now, living and serving in the presence of their ascended Lord.”⁶

Lord, in your mercy; **Bless me and hear my prayer.**

Lord, I pray for all those affected by CV19.

For those on the front line.

For those in hospital.

For those who have lost their jobs.

For those who will lose their jobs.

For those stuck at home.

For those with no homes.

For our country and those in positions of power with impossible decisions to make.

For our church and all it's people.

Lord, in your mercy; **Bless me and hear my prayer.**

Lord, I pray for the sick and unwell.

For those with mental illness,

And for those suffering from loneliness.

For the dead and the dying.

For the bereaved and distressed.

Lord, in your mercy; **Bless me and hear my prayer.**

And lastly Lord, I pray for myself; my loved one; my family ... my friends.

Hold us close under the cloud of Ascension as we await the beauty of Pentecost sure in the knowledge that you are the way, the truth and the life.

Lord, in your mercy; **Bless me and hear my prayer.**

Amen.

1. All biblical passages from the NIV.

2. Harrison, E. F. (1979–1988). [Glory](#). In G. W. Bromiley (Ed.), *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Vol. 2, pp. 477–478). Wm. B. Eerdmans.

3. Kerpow image from; <https://www.definitions.net/definition/KERPOW>

4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-48146305>

5. <https://christianpersecutionreview.org.uk/storage/2019/07/final-report-and-recommendations.pdf>

6. Alan Warren. Ed. Frank Colquhoun. 1982. *New Parish Prayers*. Hodder and Stoughton. p64.