

Discussion and Reflection Questions

Week beginning Sunday 27th of February 2022 (Epiphany 8C)

Getting started Questions:

- What stood out for you in the sermon or other spiritual input you heard, read or saw this week?
- What has been some of the challenges of the week just gone?
- Where have you seen God at work this week?

1st Reading: Isaiah 55.10-13

10 For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.
12 For you shall go out in joy,
and be led back in peace;
the mountains and the hills before you
shall burst into song,
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress;
instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;
and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial,
for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Questions:

- This is an encouraging passage to read. How important to you think words of encouragement are, especially in times of struggle, confusion and uncertainty?
- Verse 11 suggests that our words are never in vain. We don't however, see the fruit immediately. Have you experienced a situation where you've shared words of encouragement and or faith and you've seen them bear fruit at a later time?
- Verse 12 has some classic imagery in it which has been used by hymn writers. What difference could living like this make particularly with regard to what is happening Globally at the moment?

Psalm 92.1-4, 92.12-15

1 How good to give thanks to the Lord:
to sing praises to your name, O Most High,
2 To declare your love in the morning:
and at night to sing of your faithfulness,
3 Upon the lute, upon the lute of ten strings:
and to the melody of the lyre.
4 For in all you have done, O Lord, you have made me glad:
I will sing for joy because of the works of your hands.
12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree:
they shall spread abroad like a cedar in Lebanon;
13 For they are planted in the house of the Lord:
and flourish in the courts of our God.

- 14** In old age they shall be full of sap:
they shall be sturdy and laden with branches;
15 And they will say that the Lord is just:
the Lord my Rock, in whom is no unrighteousness.

Questions:

- As we approach Lent, do you think applying Verse 2 might make a difference to your approach to Lent and or your spiritual journey?
- With the situation in Ukraine at the moment, is it important to keep looking for the good things that God is doing or is this a time when we should be really focusing on the tragedies of our world? Is there a balance?
- Verse 12 says the righteous shall flourish. But how do we reconcile when it seems like evil flourishes and the righteous are victimised?

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15.51-58

51 Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed,
52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. **53** For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. **54** When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' **55** 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **58** Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

Questions:

- This is a passage often used at funerals (particularly at graveside funerals which don't happen as often as they used to). Have you heard this passage before and how has it made you feel?
- How important is it to be focusing on the promise of eternal life when our world is hearing the drums of war?
- Have you experienced the power of love conquering death?

Gospel: Luke 6.39-49

39 He also told them a parable: 'Can a blind person guide a blind person? Will not both fall into a pit? **40** A disciple is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully qualified will be like the teacher. **41** Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? **42** Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye", when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye. **43** 'No good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit; **44** for each tree is known by its own fruit. Figs are not gathered from thorns, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. **45** The good person out of the good treasure of the heart produces good, and the evil person out of evil treasure produces evil; for it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks. **46** 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and do not do what I tell you? **47** I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words, and acts on them. **48** That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. **49** But the one who hears and does not act is like a man who built a house on the ground

without a foundation. When the river burst against it, immediately it fell, and great was the ruin of that house.'

Questions:

- This "parable" is more like a battery of short parables. Which one do relate to most and which one do you find the most challenging?
- There's lots of little bits of advice here. Verse 46 shows Jesus a little frustrated when his advice is not followed. How do you feel when your advice is not followed and how do you think God might feel when we don't follow God's word?
- With flood waters on the Gold Coast (and much of other parts of QLD at the moment) verses 48-49 seem appropriate. How important is preparation in both life and faith?

Prayer of the week

Grant, O Lord, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by your governance, that your Church may joyfully serve you in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Ukraine

God of peace and justice,
we pray for the people of Ukraine today.
We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.
We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.
We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment and compassion
to guide their decisions.
Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.
We pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.
Amen.
(Archbishop Justin Welby
Archbishop Stephen Cottrell)