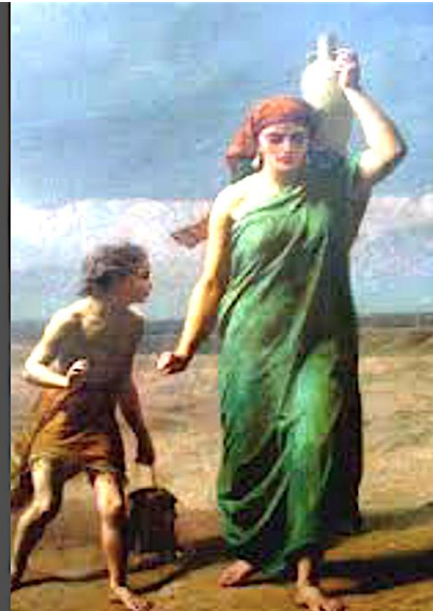


GOD'S WORD FOR THE WEEK

SUNDAY 21ST JUNE 2020

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY



THE COLLECT

Lord, you have taught us
that all our doings without love are nothing worth:
Send your Holy Spirit
and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love,
the true bond of peace and of all virtues,
without which whoever lives is counted dead before you.
Grant this for your only Son Jesus Christ's sake.

THE OLD TESTAMENT READING

Genesis 21: 8-21

8 The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. ⁹But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. ¹⁰So she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac.' ¹¹The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. ¹²But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named after you.' ¹³As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring.' ¹⁴So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. ¹⁶Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, 'Do not let me look on the death of the child.' And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is.' ¹⁸Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' ¹⁹Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink.

20 God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. ²¹He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

THE EPISTLE

Romans 6: 1b-11

⁶What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 10: 24-39

²⁴ 'A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶ 'So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. * ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³² 'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶ and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

PSALM 86

- 1 Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me,
for I am poor and in misery.
- 2 Preserve my soul, for I am faithful;
save your servant, for I put my trust in you.
- 3 Be merciful to me, O Lord, for you are my God;
I call upon you all the day long.
- 4 Gladden the soul of your servant,
for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
- 5 For you, Lord, are good and forgiving,
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.
- 6 Give ear, O Lord, to my prayer
and listen to the voice of my supplication.
- 7 In the day of my distress I will call upon you,
for you will answer me.
- 8 Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord,
nor any works like yours.
- 9 All nations you have made shall come and worship you, O Lord,
and shall glorify your name.
- 10 For you are great and do wonderful things;
you alone are God.
- 16 Turn to me and have mercy upon me;
give your strength to your servant
and save the child of your handmaid.
- 17 Show me a token of your favour,
that those who hate me may see it and be ashamed;
because you, O Lord, have helped and comforted me.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

The Old Testament Reading:

It must be said that we hear more about Abraham and Isaac within our Christian faith than we do Hagar and Ishmael and yet, both sons of Abraham were set and appointed by God to become great leaders and forefathers of generations. Isn't it interesting how the complicated dynamics of two women and the near tragedy that enfolds does not deter God from realising his future for these boys. God, through this scripture, is impartial to either tribe it seems. He provides an angelic presence for Hagar at the very beginning of the whole process surrounding Ishmael's birth and during her lowest ebb as an outcast. He hears her cry and the cry of her dying son and responds with a stream of fresh water in the midst of intense drought.

We can often become mildly obsessed with our point of view, or worse again, convinced that there is only one right way. God stands back and sees the bigger picture in our lives and the lives of those around us. In what situation do you need to see the bigger picture today? Ask God to assist you with this.

The Epistle:

Sometimes the most productive outcome when trying to encourage someone is positive encouragement. Too often in the church in past centuries we have been condemned before we begin and, for someone who is suffering, a place of condemnation is too deep a mire to pull oneself out of! The Letter to the Romans this morning again presents us with a bigger picture. Read again these magnificent words: .

⁸But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The writer is urging us to begin in the knowledge that we are baptised into a death and new life with and through Christ. We begin as resurrected people! If we really believe in these words, surely we observe (from within ourselves) new life and a new understanding.

This world is beautiful but can often pull us by its own gravity, its noise and busyness, away from our spiritual life in Christ. He has made the difference in our lives by dying that we might live and through him we are offered life in abundance. Can you reinvest your thoughts in this profound truth today? Let it sit with you and within you and know that you are valued and loved by the creator of this world.

The Gospel:

The end of this scripture is difficult to read. This is not the first time that Jesus has made it clear that he has not come to sail through his life performing wonderful miracles and teaching love alone but also he has come to make us think and decide and debate and argue with each other. He has come to make us question and some of us will understand this and some will not. Complacency in life is not necessarily the best journey when it comes to learning and growth. It seems, according to the Gospel above, that the arguments and division will come by putting those we love closer to ourselves in our hearts than Christ himself. Isn't it possible to love our loved-ones even more if we put Christ first? What does putting Christ first mean in your life? Spending time connecting with the source of life itself can only produce in us an even greater ability to truly love those who lie closest to our hearts.

Jesus doesn't desire to take us from those we love but to become the source of the love we show and share with others.