

God's Word for this Week – October 25th 2020

Dear Reader,

For many months now we have been drawn together by weekly scriptures and prayer. Now, more than ever, we need to come together, trusting in God's goodness and mercy; his guidance and accompaniment. This week's God's Word is dedicated to all those who are suffering from recent restrictions; in particular, those whose mental health is altered and those who feel isolated. The readings chosen for this week step out of the lectionary and are chosen to bring hope in a time of great uncertainty. They come with a blessing for your continued safety and good health and for the knowledge of God's constant presence with us in every passing moment.

Cathy



The Collect of the Day

Blessed Lord,
who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:
Help us to hear them,
to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them
that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word,
we may embrace and for ever hold fast
the blessed hope of everlasting life,
which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Introduction to the Scripture

Some people struggle with the Old Testament Scriptures and understandably so. Some scriptures portray an angry God who seems far from the God we know and love and some are filled with death and destruction. How in heaven's name do we associate those readings with God, let alone today's world and our own lives?

One answer may be to look for the pattern in scripture (this is found particularly in the psalms). It is a pattern that follows a process of Orientation-Disorientation-Reorientation. I remember the significant impact this realisation had upon me as a new ordinand in college. All of a sudden I began to understand that the strife and difficulties within the scriptures (particularly surrounding God's people) were a timeline of process in which they were born into a certain set of circumstances; their lives were changed dramatically and they were re-formed and reorientated by God into new people, never to be the same again.

In every human life there is a time of disorientation when everything we think we knew to be sure and certain may be upturned and leave us completely disorientated. Although we may not be capable of seeing it at the time, deep within this particular circumstance, whatever that might be, we find God; right at the coalface and with us, guiding and directing us to a form of redemption within ourselves. Can you remember a moment in your life when you experienced a deep sense of loss or disorientation?

Can you look back now and see the process of recovery that took place as a continuous journey and can you see God's hand in this process?

At times like these it's vitally important that we remind ourselves that God seeks for us to have LIFE and life in abundance. Here is a beautiful piece from the Prophet Jeremiah – a willing servant who opened his heart so fully to God that the Almighty was able to speak through him to us today!

The First Reading

Jeremiah 29: 11-14

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back from captivity.^[a] I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you," declares the Lord, "and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile."

The Prophet Jeremiah (Sistine Chapel Ceiling)



The Epistle Reading

Romans 12: 4-6

If we are to consider ourselves apart and individual we are to feel isolation in a much deeper sense. These days we need to know, even if we cannot be together, that we are united as one part of the body of Christ; intrinsic and uniquely different parts of one God. Surely this provides a light through these darker evenings and, with God's help, reaches across the boundaries set in place at this present time.

⁴For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

The Gospel Reading

Do you also feel the deep sense of love behind the words of John 17 as Jesus finally places his followers (and those yet to come to know of him) into the hands of God. Artist Ian McKillop catches the vulnerability and pure sincerity of Jesus' plea for the protection of all those he loves.

What a remarkable man! He knows that he is facing into dire circumstances and yet, as he did upon the cross in thinking of his Mother Mary and John his disciple, so he thinks of all those he leave behind and sees to it that they too are cared for.

Take time to read and re-read the following passage and let the power of Christ's words of blessing wash over you at times when you may be feeling despair or loneliness. The Christ who was present at the beginning of time has drawn down the blessing of Almighty God upon you so that you are united with Him and God as one!

Ian McKillop, "Jesus' High Priestly Prayer,"



⁶“I have revealed you^[a] to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For 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. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of^[b] your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by^[c] that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by^[d] the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

²⁰“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—²³I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

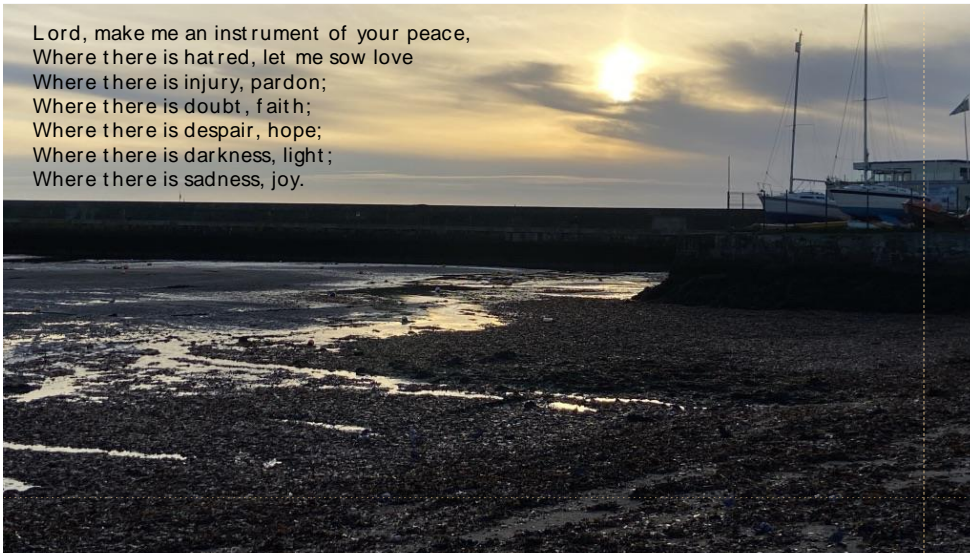
Prayers



Almighty and all-loving God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
We pray to you through Christ the Healer
For those who suffer from the Coronavirus Covid19
In Ireland and across the world.
We pray too for all who reach out to those who mourn the loss
Of each and every person who has died as a result of contracting the
disease.
Give wisdom to policymakers,
Skill to healthcare professionals and researchers,
Comfort to everyone in distress
And a sense of calm to us all in these days of uncertainty and
distress.
This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who showed
compassion to the outcast, acceptance to the rejected and love to
those to whom no love was shown. Amen.

Archbishop Michael Jackson

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.



Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in dignity;
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.
May our hearts be open
to all the people and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects
and shared dreams. Amen.

Fratelli Tutti, Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis.



"All shall be well and all shall
be well...for there is a force
of love moving through the
universe that holds us fast
and will never let us go."

St. Julian of Norwich c. 1342-1416