

# God's Word for this Week

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2021

## The Heart of the Matter!

*Our Readings this week speak about the Heart of an individual and how God works within us to bring about change. This is not a promise made millennia ago but something visibly on-going in the world today!*

### The Collect of the Fifth Sunday in Lent

Most merciful God,  
who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ  
delivered and saved the world:  
Grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross,  
we may triumph in the power of his victory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*God promises a new covenant in which God's law is written on people's hearts, and in which no one needs to instruct another, because all people will know God, will be forgiven by God and will automatically follow God's ways.*

### Jeremiah 31: 31-34

31 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,\* says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.



Rembrandt – 'Jeremiah'

*A celebration of God's law that is valuable and precious and that is hidden in the heart, making the person who treasures it happy.*

### **Psalm 119: 9-16**

- <sup>9</sup> How can young people keep their way pure?  
By guarding it according to your word.
- <sup>10</sup> With my whole heart I seek you;  
do not let me stray from your commandments.
- <sup>11</sup> I treasure your word in my heart,  
so that I may not sin against you.
- <sup>12</sup> Blessed are you, O Lord;  
teach me your statutes.
- <sup>13</sup> With my lips I declare  
all the ordinances of your mouth.
- <sup>14</sup> I delight in the way of your decrees  
as much as in all riches.
- <sup>15</sup> I will meditate on your precepts,  
and fix my eyes on your ways.
- <sup>16</sup> I will delight in your statutes;  
I will not forget your word.

*Jesus has been appointed by God as a priest like Melchizedek. He suffered for God's people, crying out to God in his anguish, and God heard him because of his devotion and obedience. Now he is the source of salvation for all.*

### **The Epistle**

### **Hebrews 5: 5-10**

- 5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,  
'You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you';
- <sup>6</sup>as he says also in another place,  
'You are a priest for ever,  
according to the order of Melchizedek.'
- 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus\* offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup>Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; <sup>9</sup>and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, <sup>10</sup>having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

*To lose one's life in order to save it is to turn away from the world's understanding of life as we have known it and embrace the workings of God inside ourselves which lead to transformation within us and the lives around us. This is the seed that falls to the earth in order to produce much fruit. It is in dying to the things that occupy our minds which will perish and tuning into the spiritual part of ourselves that will flourish new life within us. Here again we are invited to think again that Jesus is actively drawing you to himself every day rather than a once off event of the past.*

### **The Gospel Reading**

### **John 12: 20-33**

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup>They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.' <sup>22</sup>Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup>Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup>Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

27 'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' <sup>29</sup>The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.' <sup>30</sup>Jesus answered, 'This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup>Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup>And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people\* to myself.' <sup>33</sup>He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

### **Words to Reflect upon..**

#### **CONNECTING WITH LIFE:**

##### **Global Application:**

The idea of a new covenant, a new way of being, that calls us to die in order to live may sound too "spiritual" and esoteric to have any relevance in the "real" world, but it is, in fact, exactly what we need as we face the major crises of our generation. We need to die to the economic systems built on unlimited greed and consumption, in order to find a new way to live and use our wealth to build a more sustainable society. We need to

die to short-sighted, expedient exploitation of the world's natural resources for our own gain, in order to make a new covenant with the earth, and find a way to live on our planet with responsibility and restraint. We need to die to our false sense of disconnection with others, and die to our aggressive, protectionist tribalism in order to build a new connected, respectful and equitable world. We need to die to our lack of compassion for the poor, the sick and the oppressed in order to work more intentionally and consistently for justice for all. In so many ways the world as we know it – our current “covenant” with each other, with God and with the earth – is inadequate. Our current “laws” and “traditions” are unable to deal with the challenges we now face. Our organisations and institutions are hopelessly ill-equipped to navigate the complexity of our society. However, to bring about the needed change will require a death. We cannot build a new way of being without letting go of the old. We cannot just “tweak” the systems. We need to release them in some significant ways, and endure the pain, the death, that will result. Death, birth, and change all result in times of chaos before order emerges. Unless we can embrace this chaos, this “dying to live” we will just continue to do things as we always have done, and in the process, we will lose our lives. But, if we are willing to follow Christ, risk the new “covenant” and lose our lives, we will discover a new life – a new world – waiting for us.

## Pray Today

### *Inscribe*

Inscribe on our hearts, God,  
the love you have for us,  
the life you give us,  
the constancy of your presence with us;

Inscribe on our hearts, God,  
the call to follow you,  
the longing to know you,  
the compassion to love as you do;

Inscribe on our hearts, God,  
the story of salvation,  
the part we play in your purposes,  
the vision of your dream for creation;

Inscribe on our hearts, God,  
all that you hold in yours,  
or at least, as much of it as we can carry.

Amen.

When the truth-twisting accusations were spat in Your face, Jesus,  
when the crowds chanted their execution-call,  
when the nails forced their way through Your flesh,  
Things could have been very different,  
if not for Your embrace of death.

But, You knew that love would lead to the cross,  
it always does,  
to laying down life for the beloved.  
and you embraced Your death willingly  
inviting us to follow.

So, if not for Your embrace of death,  
we could never know what it is  
to love those who don't deserve it;  
we could never find the anger  
to resist the injustice that steals dignity;  
we could never have our hearts broken  
at the grief and need of strangers;  
we could never risk ourselves  
to challenge violence, corruption and abuse.

But, in answer to Your call, we follow You  
into the embrace of death,  
laying down our lives in small acts of prayer,  
service and justice,  
allowing the suffering of others into our hearts.

And we ask that in some small way,  
our expressions of love and sacrifice,  
may bring greater wholeness into our world.

Amen.