

Lay Preachers' Bulletin – November 2020

November's lectionary notes have been provided by The Rev. Deacon Elizabeth Short, All Saints, Cochrane.

November 1, 2020 - All Saints

Matthew 5:1-12

The Beatitudes

- How does this passage connect to our great story? God called Moses, with Aaron to go up the mountain where he encounters God and receives the law. He is a witness to who God is. Now Jesus, with his disciples ascends the mountain. Like Aaron, the disciples have set themselves apart and are witnesses to not just Jesus' teaching, but Jesus Christ himself. What is the difference between hearing the word and embodying it?
- Why is this passage chosen for All Saints Day, or, perhaps, what message is this passage sending us on this Day? Matthew's gospel seems to have 2 main focuses – what it means to be a disciple, and on the Kingdom of God both now and to come. How do we put this passage into Matthew's context and in the theme of All Saints?
- It is tempting to classify the Beatitudes as a lofty set of ideals we are to achieve. But in light of Matthew's constant teaching about the kingdom of heaven that is *not* attained by works or position, this doesn't make sense. In teaching the Beatitudes, Jesus is teaching about himself. We are all called to be saints – to be like Christ. How do we model the Beatitudes? We are also called to be the church. If the Beatitudes are considered in a corporate way, what does that mean? Although we may not individually be able to embody the Beatitudes, how can the church do so?

November 8 - Remembrance Sunday

John 6:35-51

- Jesus is a familiar – ordinary – figure to this crowd and he uses an everyday, ordinary thing like bread to explain himself. It is easy for the crowds, in their familiarity to miss the point, to dismiss him, to be annoyed by him even. How are we part of that crowd? How do we miss the point? Is it easier to put our trust in what we think we know rather than be drawn into the mystery of who Jesus is; to open our hearts to the life Jesus is offering us?
- As we remember those who fought in the past wars, this year we ourselves are living in the midst of a world crisis. What words of hope does this Gospel passage offer us? How has God, over the centuries sustained us? How, as God incarnate, does Jesus draw us in?
- The Eucharist is central to our lives as Anglicans. Where is the Eucharistic preaching in this passage? As one commentator (Karoline Lewis) said, “What Jesus provides is also who Jesus is.”
- By its very definition, Remembrance Sunday invites us to look back. We think of those who died, and we remember the horrors of war, hoping not to repeat past mistakes. At an Anglican funeral we sometimes will look back in eulogies, but the major purpose is to point us to the hope of the resurrection. How is this message of hope stated?

November 15, 2020 - Pentecost 24

Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Talents

- In Matthew's time a talent was a large sum of money. In this case up to 15 years wage for one of these workers. That is a lot of money to be

entrusted with. Think of the risk factor in this venture! What kind of risk taking is involved in living out our call to love others, to include, to serve those less fortunate, to show humility, to choose a path less travelled? By contrast what do we stand to lose if we don't take the risk?

- Throughout the past weeks we have been following Matthew's gospel stories (parables) of unmerited grace. A theme is that all God asks for is faith. These are stories of abundance, not punitive measures. In this instance the owner asks only for the workers to make an effort; to try. What puts the worker outside the circle is his unwillingness to trust. He expects the owner will think the way he thinks. How are we being asked to step out? How do we measure works – checks and balances – against God's mercy and grace?
- We know a lot about fear these days. Do we fear God's judgement to the point that we bury him away and avoid thinking about him? Or do we have a fear of failure in this success-oriented world? Do we misunderstand Jesus message of love, mercy and grace because we think in the world's terms of success? Do we think of Jesus as a good person with admirable ideals for us to attain or do we enter into the Kingdom that is Jesus?

November 22, 2020 - Reign of Christ

Matthew 25:31-46

The Great Judgment

- Chrysostom says: "He said not I was sick and ye healed me; or in prison and ye set me free; but ye *visited me and came unto me.*" A real, personal service of Christ is implied, one involving some sacrifice of ease, time and property." Again, we are not being judged by results, but by what is in our hearts, our will. As asked before, is Jesus an admirable person to look up to and emulate or is he the Kingdom of Heaven to which we have been invited to enter?

- Words are cheap. Is it possible to advocate for a just world, where mercy and care for those who are “less” is present, without actually getting our hands dirty? If so is that a betrayal of Jesus’ message? Throughout Matthew’s Gospel we see Jesus training disciples. As disciples of Jesus, how do we do likewise? How do we wish to ask God to shape our will?
- Robert Farrar Capon says this: “In the Great Judgment, all of the themes of Jesus’ earlier parables come full circle. In the parables of the kingdom at the beginning of his ministry, he set forth a saving action of God that had five unique characteristics. He proclaimed a kingdom that was *catholic*, not parochial; that was *mysterious*, not recognizable; that was *actual*, not merely virtual or on the way; that was met with *hostility* as well as welcome; and that called for a *response of faith* rather than works. Now at the end we see those characteristics brought to fruition in a variety of ways.” In a world where Christ reigns – in our Christian world – what does this say about the nature of the Kingdom. How is this an appropriate theme to end the year?
- Jesus, that great Shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. It is too easy to think bad people versus good people. But Shepherds care for goats as well. In the end Jesus draws all unto himself and this is the message of his redeeming grace and mercy. In so many instances Jesus points to those outside the gates – the prodigal son, the Samaritan leper – and demonstrates how they have their place in the kingdom. Again and again, Jesus does not measure in worldly terms. Even those who, by their will, choose to place themselves outside the Kingdom are not beyond redemption. What are the messages of reconciliation and forgiveness in the resurrected Christ?

November 29, 2020 - First Sunday in Advent – Year B,
Mark 13:24-37

Keep Awake

(**Note:** We now enter Year B. This year will focus largely on the Gospel of Mark. I would like to recommend a short book entitled *Meeting God in Mark*, by former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. It is intended to be used as a Lenten study, but it is valuable at any time and gives very helpful insights into this Gospel.)

- This is a quote from the above-mentioned book: “Commentators on Mark have quite often said that you must imagine the Gospel aimed at a Church that is perhaps a bit too much in love with wonderworking and success, a Church that puts too much store by tangible signs of God’s favour and God’s assistance; and I think there’s a great deal in that. But this has to be filled out further by what some other commentators have suggested – that Mark is writing for a Church baffled and fearful because the signs and the miracles aren’t coming thick and fast. What is coming thick and fast is persecution and a sense of threat and failure. Mark is writing into the life of communities experiencing fear and disorientation.” How does this speak to the current crisis we are facing with the global pandemic? Rather than leaping to the conclusion that the end is near, how do you speak to the mystery of not knowing and the need to be vigilant. What does that look like in the middle of a pandemic? We live in uncertain times – we always do. If time isn’t a sure thing, what certainty are we given?
- This is an apocalyptic writing. Rather than preparing for the end, how do we enter a place of expecting God’s revelation? How does God come again?
- We are fond of using time as a measure, almost as a way to control things, relying heavily on scheduling our lives and the lives of others. We have sayings like “time heals all wounds”, “time is of the essence”, “when the

time is right”, “all in good time”. What does it mean to live in God’s time? How does God come, even when we aren’t ready? (based on Commentary by Karoline Lewis)

- St. Augustine says this: “What is the remedy then? O man, cleave to God, by whom thou wast made a man; cleave fast to Him, put thy affiance in Him, call upon Him, let Him be thy strength. Say to Him, “In Thee, O Lord, is my strength.” And then thou shalt sing at the threatenings of men; and what thou shalt sing hereafter, the Lord Himself telleth thee, “I will hope in God, I will not fear what man can do unto me.” What is it that makes this passage not just one of admonition or warning, but of hope?