



# Sunday Reflection

## 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

in the Charges of St Margarets, Renfrew  
& St Johns, Johnstone



For Sunday 25 October 2020

# Pentecost 21

On this twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost today we listen as Jesus enters into a debate with some Pharisees about God's commandments and about the identity of the long-awaited messiah. Let us join together to praise and worship with all our hearts and souls God the Father, who sends his Son to bring salvation to us.

## Reflection for this week's Gospel

**"What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?"**

*Matthew 22:42*

### **An Illustration to set the scene**

One of Aesop's well-known fables concerns a dispute between the North Wind and the Sun. Each claimed to be stronger than the other and they agreed to try their powers upon a traveller, to see which could soonest strip him of his cloak. The North Wind had the first try; and, gathering up all his force for the attack, he came whirling furiously down upon the man, and caught up his cloak as though he would wrest it from him by one single effort: but the harder he blew, the more closely the man wrapped it around himself. Then came the turn of the Sun. At first he beamed gently upon the traveller, who soon unclasped his cloak and walked on with it hanging loosely about his shoulders: then he shone forth in his full strength, and the man, before he had

gone many steps, was glad to throw his cloak right off and complete his journey more lightly clad and with his face lifted to receive the Sun's warmth and light.

Gentleness and warmth turn out to be stronger than brute force and fury.

### **Looking at the teaching of the Gospel**

In today's Gospel reading Jesus is in dispute with some Pharisees who ask him, "Which commandment in the Law is the greatest?" That question has an answer that any Jew would give: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." Jesus adds an equally familiar law: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." He also links the two and says that from these two laws hang all the Law and the prophets. The Pharisees don't respond to what Jesus says – their trap is empty; he has not repudiated any of the commandments.

Now Jesus asks them a question which is deceptively simple. "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" The Pharisees give the obvious answer: "The son of David." It was a commonly held belief among the Jews at that time that the messiah would be descended from David. He would be a mighty king, leading his people in war, overthrowing the Roman oppressors and winning victories over all the enemies of Israel.

Jesus then asks another question, which is not so simple and is based on the beginning of Psalm 110, which was generally held to be written by David and to refer to the messiah: "The Lord says to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'" David refers to his descendant as "my lord" and says that the Lord offers him a share of his throne, until all opposition to his rule is banished. Jesus' question is this: if the

long-awaited messiah is David's descendant, how do the Pharisees explain these words? How can David's descendant be both David's son and his lord? If the messiah is a son of the Lord, would he not live according to God's greatest commandments, to love God and neighbour with his whole being? This messiah would not be a military leader, waging war on his and Israel's enemies. He and his people would be called to live according to God's commandments of love, drawing others into fellowship with him through gentleness and warmth.

### **How can we reflect on the application to our lives?**

It's a tough challenge to love our neighbours even if they mean us harm or are simply so different that we can see no common ground. It's a tough challenge to put our whole being into loving God. We're often weary, stressed and overburdened by relationships and complications in our lives. They are like that strong North Wind that made the traveller tighten up his protective defences. We need to lift our faces towards God's Son, allowing him to warm us and open us up to receiving his gentle loving kindness. If we look to him with all the longing of our hearts, our souls and our minds, he will respond to our longing like the sun, touching us with his gentle love, warmth and comfort.

**“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?”**

*Matthew 22:42*

Please share your response to this reflection to [Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](mailto:Rector@SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk) – did anything speak to you? Did you feel challenged, angered, consoled by something in the words? How did God's spirit move you as you read it? Have you shared the words with someone else? Is this a worthwhile thing to make available to folk whilst we cannot meet for corporate worship to share in word and sacrament? What are your thoughts?

**[www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk](http://www.SECStJohnStMargaret.org.uk)**

