



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

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



For Sunday 6 June 2021

Pentecost 2

We come to worship the light of the world, in whom there is no darkness. We come to express our trust in the Word of truth. We come, confident that as we draw near to God, God draws near to us to transform and renew our lives.

Reflection for this week's Gospel

"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand." Mark 3:24

An Illustration to set the scene

C. S. Lewis's children's book **The Last Battle** is a parable of the end times, set in the **land of Narnia**. Towards the story's climax, Lucy and Eustace, the central characters, encounter some surly Dwarves who, apparently oblivious to the heavenly open air of their surroundings, think they are stuck in a dark, shabby stable.

The children appeal to King Aslan, who conjures up a sumptuous feast. But though the Dwarves eat, they cannot taste the delicious food and complain that they're chewing bits of old turnip.

One Dwarf sips a goblet of wine and declares with disgust that it's like drinking water from a donkey's trough.

The Dwarves are a proud group, determined to rely only on themselves. But their refusal to put their trust in Aslan, Narnia's true ruler, closes them off from enjoying the king's gifts.

"They have chosen cunning instead of belief," says Aslan. "Their prison is only in their minds, yet they are... so afraid of being taken in that they cannot be taken out."

The Dwarves choose time after time to reject the king, until their hostile and suspicious mindset is something that even Aslan is powerless to overcome.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

Three different groups converge around the presence and power of Jesus in Mark's Gospel.

Each responds in a different way.

The crowd seeks to come closer, hungry to listen and receive wisdom from this rabbi who is out of the ordinary.

Jesus' family want to contain this relative who seems to be out of his mind.

The religious establishment of scribes from Jerusalem seeks to label Jesus as an enemy, this so-called holy man who is really one of the devil's own.

Jesus is quick to expose the absurdity of the scribes' argument.

His ministry sets free the demon-possessed and subdues the forces of evil. If he too is of the devil, why would Satan want to weaken his own side in a form of demonic civil war?

Calling Jesus the enemy is a way of stirring up hostility towards him and encouraging others to reject him.

History has shown many times that the way to justify destroying one who is feared is first to label them as an undesirable “other”, to isolate and de-humanise the unwanted.

The scribes see their power and influence threatened by Jesus and his ministry. Rather than bow the knee they choose to defend their own interests.

But Jesus warns them against hardening their hearts and entrenching their attitudes against him.

Gods’ redemption in Christ covers every sin ever committed by the whole human race.

The only unforgivable sin arises when someone is so stuck in their mindset, insisting that light is darkness.

Such folk exclude themselves from the generosity of God’s forgiveness

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

Talk of unforgivable sin can generate anxiety, as we wonder if we have crossed the line to commit a condemned act.

But if such a prospect concerns you, then you are not in that category. Those whose conscience is live and whose desire is to please the Lord, are not at spiritual risk.

As the drama of Christ’s incarnation is played out in Mark’s Gospel, the destinies of those who encounter Jesus are not yet set, but Jesus warns the scribes that their determination to disbelieve is putting them in danger.

Choosing to reject Christ is not a neutral decision.

Each time it is made, the person changes.

The character we become is an accumulation of our choices.

We are free to choose as we will, but we live with the consequences of what we decide.

We can use this awareness to make faith-filled choices. Every day we are faced with opportunities to say yes to God, to respond to a nudge of the Holy Spirit's guidance in what we do, say and think.

Each small act of obedience to God brings us one step deeper into the kingdom, so that we are indeed, as St Paul puts it, "transformed... from one degree of glory to another" (2 Corinthians 3:18) on our journey home to Jesus..

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Please share your response to this reflection to 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?

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