



Sunday Reflection

Ordinary Time

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



For Sunday 20 June 2021

Pentecost 4

Jesus entered history as a servant, to give his life as a ransom for many. Let us humble ourselves before him as we come together in worship, and strengthen our resolve to listen for God's call in our lives amid all the distractions, fears and temptations that beset us.

Reflection for this week's Gospel

"Peace! Be still!" Mark 4:39

An Illustration to set the scene

In his work on the human psyche, Carl Jung promoted the idea of archetypes, that is, patterns of behaviour or symbolic narratives that characterise the world in which we live.

These characters may wear different clothing from one place or time to the next, but they exist empirically – really - , and reside in what Jung called the “collective unconscious”.

Each conveys a truth which helps us navigate everyday life.

One of the archetypes is the “ruler”, or “king”, which is not to say that the archetype is masculine, but is rather a description of that instinct within each of us to pursue order rather than chaos, to provide structure within our sphere of influence. It is the authority figure, the one we respect and turn to in trouble, the one on whom we fall back to sort things out when life goes wrong.

The American Franciscan priest Richard Rohr, who has applied much of Jung's work to a Christian understanding of the world, talks about the king on his throne always having his feet firmly on the ground, planted in the earth.

In so doing, he is rooted and stable, able to withstand attack from every side.

Even if everything is taken away from him, the king is still a king inside. He has an inner stillness and resolve that cannot be plundered, understands his value, and can therefore cope with changing fortunes.

Looking at the teaching of the Gospel

The sea, as it is described in the Gospels, is often interpreted by Biblical scholars as a place of trial and challenge.

Like the desert, it is unsafe, showing us that the elements of the natural world can rise up with power and might, moving us aside in a second.

In such circumstances we can easily be convinced of our own insignificance.

Jesus is travelling in the boat along with his disciples as they journey from one place to another.

One simple interpretation of this passage is that, having calmed the storms of the sea, Jesus will likewise calm the storms of our own lives if we only put our faith in him.

Yet our own experience is that the storms often fail to subside however much we believe or pray.

Today's Gospel teaches us, rather, that we will suffer, but the suggestion is that the Lord is never apart from us, even in what may seem the most desperate of circumstances.

The reading from Job offers encouragement that the storms will come only as close as we can handle.

The Lord says he has “prescribed bounds” for the sea: “Thus far shall you come, and no farther”.

But it is the deep belief in the presence of Jesus, and being in communion with him that gives us confidence to withstand the storms.

“Why are you afraid?” asks Jesus, “Have you still no faith?”

How can we reflect on the application to our lives?

The storms may not abate, but neither ought they to define us; there is a larger narrative at play.

Despite all our trials, we are here to be of some “*definite service*”, as John Henry Newman said, and to remain focused on our life’s work and mission, whatever external forces might distract us.

We travel from one side of the lake to the other and needn’t be directed off course.

In his famous poem, “**If**”, Rudyard Kipling described Triumph and Disaster as: “**two impostors**” to be treated “**just the same**”.

Perhaps, when he wrote it, Kipling had in mind the words of St Paul in today’s reading from 2 Corinthians: “***We are treated as impostors, and yet are true***”.

We are to stay rooted in good times and bad, with our feet on the ground, secure in the knowledge that, whatever happens around us, our destination is fixed, as is our identity in God.

Job, again, has this revealed to him: God laid the foundation of the world, sunk its bases and laid its cornerstone.

Job's example is of one who loses everything but whose life was founded on God, and onto whom he held when all was taken from him. It is to his humble trust in God that we are to aspire.

This is the attitude of the ruler or king archetype, perfectly embodied by Jesus, who was anointed as a servant king.

"Peace! Be still!" Mark 4:39

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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