

Proper 14

(Sunday between 7 and 13 August inclusive) • Ordinary Time, week 19

Principal Service readings

Genesis 15.1-6 Abram's faith was reckoned as righteousness
Psalm 33.12-22 [or 33.12-21] Trust in God who cares
Hebrews 11.1-3, 8-16 The faith of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob ...
Luke 12.32-40 Do not be afraid, be dressed and ready for action

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

Trust in God, be generous, and be ready

Jesus said to his disciples, ³² 'Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

³³ 'Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

³⁵ 'Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; ³⁶ be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks.

³⁷ Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹ But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.'

Luke 12.32-40 NRSV¹

¹ New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the

Comments and Questions

In the Christian life we are exhorted to look forward, to pray for the coming of the kingdom, and to live in anticipation of it. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist we look forward as well as remembering, and rejoicing in the present. The eucharistic acclamations each have this forward-looking element:

Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life:
Lord Jesus, come in glory.

When we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim your death, Lord Jesus, until you come in glory.

Lord, by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world.

Which of these conveys most to you the sense of the coming kingdom and the need to be prepared for it?

Jesus' teaching encouraging his disciples to sell their possessions and give to the poor is seen as preparation for the coming of the Son of Man. In what ways do possessions prevent us from looking forward, or being ready for, the coming of the kingdom God grants?

Giving to the poor is a recurrent concern of Jesus as shown by Luke. Do we recognise it as being an essential part of the Christian life? What degree of responsibility do we have for helping the poor, and how do we show this, personally and in the church in general?

Jesus gives an example of the master returning, and then going on to serve his servants.

'Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit' (v.35) is a reference to the passover, ritual actions prescribed by law for all those celebrating this Jewish festival.

'Expect the unexpected' is a catchphrase. Can we really be ready for the unexpected? How can we make ourselves more ready?

Quotations

1

¹ Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. ³ By faith

National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

2

we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.

Hebrews 11.1-3 NRSV

2

So I put you this question: what is it you want, what is it you are looking for, when you come to church? What indeed if not mercy? Then show mercy here on earth, and you will receive mercy in heaven. A poor person is begging from you, and you are begging from God. The beggar asks for a scrap to eat, you ask for eternal life. Give to the beggar, so that you may deserve to receive from Christ. Listen to his words: 'Give and it shall be given you.' I say again, what effrontery for you to want to receive what you refuse to give! And so when you come to church give whatever alms you can to the poor in proportion to your means.

Sermon 25,1 Caesarius of Arles c.470–543

3

In one sense, fear is faith in what you do not want to happen.

Fear no Evil / David Watson. 1984. p.152-3

Related topics

For further study:

Paschal mystery; Faith; Reign of God (present and future); Cross; Eschatology

Closing Prayer

O God,
on whom our faith rests secure
and whose kingdom we await,
sustain us by word and sacrament
and keep us alert for the coming of the Son of Man,
that we may welcome him without delay.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Collect for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C²

² *Opening Prayers : Scripture-related Collects for Years A, B and C, from The Sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999. – (The ICEL Collects, 1997)*