

Sermon 21-10-03 Psalm 8, Hebrew 1:104, 2:5-12, Matthew 6:25-33

Divine majesty and Human dignity

I would love to say that I thought of those words as the theme for today's readings but it is actually a heading for Psalm 8 that I found in my Bible. But it does make a good summary of the theme.

Do you remember writing your address in maybe a favourite book? Starting with the bits that someone would need to return it to you if you lost it, but then helpfully adding, Europe, The World, The Universe etc. Suddenly the first line 2 Twitten Close seems very small indeed in the scheme of things, as do the people who lived there.

In the psalm today we have heard of the awesome role that God had in the creation of the world. But I'm not focussing on the psalm this morning – if that interests you, come to hear more at reflective worship tonight. I'm thinking more of the gospel passage. Just as we are only a small part of God's creation so this passage is only a small part of Jesus' sermon on the mount. In it he certainly covered a lot of ground. Don't worry I won't be talking for as long this morning.

At first glance this gospel passage is easy to understand if not to live with. Don't sow or reap, don't worry about what you will eat or drink, God will provide it. To my mind that feels morally wrong. Surely God does not expect us to sit about waiting for handouts. Surely, we must take some responsibility ourselves to look after ourselves.

What if this is less about dos and don'ts and more about priorities? Don't let the worldly things become so over whelming that there is no space for the Godly things. We hear of churches where the worry of fixing a leaky roof has become such a big issue that none of the church members has any energy remaining to remind each other of how much God loves them. Let alone going to tell anyone else the wonderful stories of Jesus. Perhaps you know someone who has allowed the demands of friends or family members to prevent them from worshipping as they would like to.

I just wanted for a moment to think about knitting. I guess there are some knitters here, probably far better than I am. In particular I am thinking about fair isle knitting – not for the faint hearted. Not only is there the difficulty of getting the right coloured stitch in the right place but the further complication of sorting the other colours at the back so that they don't show. Even in the most complicated patterns there are only a small number of types of stitch but it is the variations in their combination that brings a garment to life. And one dropped or incorrect stitch can spoil it. Society is like a piece of fair isle knitting, different people, in different combinations making up the whole – and I don't want to be the dropped stitch.

The psalm reminded us that God in his majesty created the whole universe, including all the living things on the earth, and he gave humans a special role as responsible for the other living things. Which brings us to the dignity in our title.

God granted us the special role at the head of all living things, a dignified position. But dignity is a two-way process. If we expect to be treated with dignity we need to act with dignity. In our modern

world we experience people insisting on 'their rights' often with little regard for the adverse effect this may have on others. There is a great sense of entitlement.

Jesus reminds us that the body is more than clothing – what is inside matters. This passage may contain comparisons with plants and animals but it is essentially about humans. About human relationships with God and with each other.

It is an instruction to give up. Not the obvious giving up of food and possessions but a giving up of being the most important thing. God wants us to keep our dignity by putting him before our worldly concerns. So often I find myself talking about the way that God has plans for us which may not be much like our own plans for ourselves. We forget that there are so many things over which we have no control but will still influence the way in which our lives unfold.

There are still many things over which we do have control, our own actions, when to remain silent, when to speak up, how we use our own resources. Over the past few years, we have all been made more aware of how our actions effect the earth, and those living things that we are tasked with looking after. It is up to us how we choose to respect the earth and each other as we make our own decisions on using our cars, flying, and buying new clothes. Our actions do not need to be big and dramatic, as a well-known supermarket reminds us – every little helps.

God loves us. It really is that simple and cherishes us setting an example of good parenting. We have the freedom to act

responsibly or not. And even when we fail God will forgive and allow us to start again. The poet writing Lamentations at a time of national tragedy reminds us:

' his mercies are not spent:

They are renewed each morning,

So great is his faithfulness'.

It is up to us, each of us individually how we repay that faithfulness, how we show respect to God, to the planet, to each other. His majesty is divine, respect is our responsibility.