

Worship Outline including Reflection for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity
Opening Verse of Scripture Proverbs 22.9

Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.

Collect: Prayer for the Day

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church in the burning fire of your love: grant that your people may be fervent in the fellowship of the gospel that, always abiding in you, they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading: Isaiah 35.4-7a

Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. He will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy. For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

Second Reading: James 2.1-17

My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet', have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters. Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill', and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Gospel Reading: Mark 7.24-37

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, 'Ephphatha', that is, 'Be opened.' And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Then Jesus ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. They were astounded beyond measure, saying, 'He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.'

Reflection

“They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well’”

Our text today is a really beautiful phrase in the reading from Mark, it says simply 'He has done everything well.' We live in an age of pop stars and notoriety; everybody wants to be famous. Young people especially face incredible challenges in our society, because they are led to focus their aspirations on the rich and famous and encouraged to believe that they can be the next pop idol or football star. The old values of working hard and earning a living have been shifted towards personal gratification and the aspirations and fashions of a consumer society.

It is easy to be critical of this, but in a sense every single one of us wants to leave this world with some achievements to our name. We might not find the cure for a terrible disease, but we feel that we should leave behind us a positive impression of some sort. If our lives are to be significant and remembered then we must do something significant with them. However, the truth is that whilst the prevailing culture tells us that our achievements should be to earn lots of money and have a glamorous lifestyle, we know that this is not something which

causes happiness or provides lasting significance. Few people draw admiration when they die and are fondly remembered because of the size of their yacht. Rather, we should focus on Jesus and the type of life which he lived and the example which he gives to us. He was a carpenter, a workman who probably built houses and extensions and mended things. Anybody who knows the pains of being a builder will know how difficult it would have been for him to build the reputation 'He has done everything well.'! Jesus did not belong to the rich and famous, he was just an ordinary man who lived his life with the same issues which we deal with, paying bills, caring for relatives and getting on with the ups and downs which life throws at us.

This is what life is really all about, not jet setting or appearing in Hello magazine. As Christian people we must try to provide examples of authentic living by setting examples which are wholesome and yet attractive. We must seek to lay before our children and grandchildren alternatives to the models which society presents. This is not in any way to discredit the ideals, dreams and vision of young people who want to achieve great things. However, somebody needs to reaffirm the value of living ordinary lives in which we care for our families, our children and grandchildren.

Really gifted people do not have to appear on the television, they get up in the morning and do their jobs to the best of their ability, offer a helping hand to those in need and take time to spread a little happiness. As Christians, we have to affirm that successful people are strong people who have the courage to work at their marriages and give time to their loved ones. Each one of us can make a real contribution to our families and wider society if we control our temper, show our appreciation to others, spread peace as we go about our business and pray to become more joyful. This is real achievement and the way to lasting success. This is the key for people to say about us 'he has done everything well.' Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Keep, O Lord, your Church, with your perpetual mercy; and, because without you our human frailty cannot but fall, keep us ever by your help from all things hurtful, and lead us to all things profitable to our salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.