

## **Sermon, St German's Cathedral, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2023 – with the Choristers**

**Readings:** Genesis 1:1 – 2:3; Matthew 6:25-end

**Themes:** Bells 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of rehanging; Racial Justice

This talk was interactive, so this is the framework used. The readings are included because less formal versions were used. As the Choristers join the congregation for the talk, the intercessions follow straight on and were designed to be child-friendly.

**Old Testament Reading:** (based on Genesis 1:1 – 2:3)

In the very beginning, God's love bubbled over when there was nothing else – no trees, no birds, no animals, no sky, no sea – only darkness.

Out of this love, God spoke. 'Let there be light.'

And there was day. And there was night. And when the first day was done, God smiled and knew that it was good.

On the second day, God said, 'Let there be sky where the clouds can float and the winds can blow.' And the sky was bright blue and beautiful.

On the third day, God said, 'Let the waters gather together into oceans and let the dry land appear.'

Now God decided to make the world even more dazzling, with tall trees and long grass. And then the first flower appeared in all its glory.

On the fourth day, God said, 'Let the sky be filled with the sun and the moon.' And God scattered stars across the sky like sparkling diamonds.

On the fifth day God said, 'Let there be birds to fly and sing, and fish to swim and splash.' And the world was filled with the joyous sound of birdsong.

On the sixth day, God said, 'Let there be animals - elephants and giraffes, cats and mice, and bees and bugs. And suddenly the world was a very noisy place.

but something was still missing. Then God said, 'I will make people, and I'll make them like me so they can enjoy the earth and take care of it. He did just as he had said, and it was also very, very good.

God looked at everything that he had made and clapped his hands together in delight. 'Isn't it wonderful!'

And on the seventh day, God laughed, and rested, and enjoyed his glorious creation.

**New Testament Reading:** Matthew 6: 25-26; 33-34 (The Voice)

Here is the bottom line: do not worry about your life. Don't worry about what you will eat or what you will drink. Don't worry about how you clothe your body. Living is about more than merely eating, and the body is about more than dressing up. Look at the birds in the sky. They do not store food for winter. *They don't plant gardens.* They do not sow or reap—and yet, they are always fed because your heavenly Father feeds them. And you are even more precious to Him than a beautiful bird. *If He looks after them, of course He will look after you.*

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and then all these things will be given to you *too*. So do not worry about tomorrow. Let tomorrow worry about itself. Living faithfully is a large enough task for today.

### Talk (Outline)

The Bible suggests that we are the most special – because we are created in the image of God. This means all of us. Sometimes I arrange to meet up with people I don't know so I have to give them a description so that they could recognise me. How would you describe yourself?

- Hair (colour, length, straight/curly) – Ethiopian who thought all white people looked the same
- Skin (colour, wrinkles, softness)
- Glasses
- M/F
- Old/young
- Clothing
- Disability – use of sticks/walking frames/mobility scooters
- Married/single

I usually say: I have short, straight brown hair, I wear glasses and my trousers are likely to be colourful.

What about what's inside? Things that other people can't immediately see?

How would you describe that part of yourself?

- Like different food/music/subjects at school/pets/TV programmes/games/friends
- Some people don't have an appendix anymore/gall bladder/kidney/lung/wisdom teeth – and other teeth!
- Some people have extra things, like a pace-maker to even out the work of their heart/pin or plate where they've broken a bone/fragment of a bullet.

Even though we are all different, our fingerprints are different, our DNA is different, we are all made in the image of God, and we need to treat each other with respect. God loves us all equally.

If we look back in time we can see that we haven't always treated each other with respect. Because we are an Island, boats have always been important to us. The Isle of Man has always produced sailors. For many years some of them were working on ships that took black people from Africa to America and sold them as slaves. They crammed them in together with barely enough room to stretch out to sleep. And still today there are millions of people who are treated as slaves. Some of the metals that are part of our mobile phones have been mined by children in dangerous conditions.

This is not what God wanted when he created our beautiful earth. The Bible has many verses that tell us that God wants us to be just and to treat all people fairly. It's not always easy. But our Gospel reading tells us not to worry about our lives – God will provide for us. It also challenges us to live faithfully, and acknowledges that is a full time job.

One part of living faithfully is praying for those in need. Today we **pray with our eyes**. Our Cathedral has links with different countries.

- 1) The Cross that we use comes from Ethiopia. Ethiopian art often shows people with huge eyes, and Jesus is often painted as a black Ethiopian. At the moment there is a problem in

the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia and the disagreements have caused violence. Social Media has been restricted. As we look at the cross, we pray that God will heal the wounds within his Church so that they can demonstrate Christ's love to others.

Lord, in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

- 2) This carved head comes from Zimbabwe. It is going to be placed in the gardens outside. Yesterday the opposition party wanted to hold a rally in a sports stadium. It was the 61<sup>st</sup> rally that has been banned. As we look at this sculpture we thank God for our electoral freedoms and pray that people in Zimbabwe will be able to hear the information they need before voting in their next general election.

Lord, in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

- 3) Menorah – made especially for us in Israel, using shells from the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Today relations between Israel and Palestine are still difficult, with both sides afraid of the other. As we look at the menorah we pray that the leaders of Israel and Palestine, and the ordinary people will learn to live side by side in safety.

Lord in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

- 4) Turkey – I couldn't find any Turkish Delight in Peel, so this gift box that used to contain sweets represents Turkey. We have all seen the pictures of the devastating destruction in Turkey and Syria caused by the earthquake. We've been excited when people have been brought out alive. We've been shocked and saddened to hear of the thousands who've died. As we look at the box we pray for all those whose friends and relatives have died, and for all the doctors and nurses who are caring for the injured – and for all those who are clearing the rubble and planning the rebuilding.

Lord in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

- 5) Bell – Many of those who ring our bells, also ring hand bells a bit like this one. As we look at this bell we give thanks for all those who call us to worship every Sunday, and we pray for God's blessing on them

Lord, in your mercy – **hear our prayer**

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

Rosemary Clarke  
12<sup>th</sup> February 2023