



Readings, Reflection & Prayers
Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity
19 September 2021



Jesus took a little child and said “Whoever welcomes one such child
welcomes me”

Mark 9.36-7



StJohnsAL5

www.stjohnsharpenden.org.uk

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Readings for this Sunday

These are the readings for this Sunday which you may like to read from your bibles at home.

Proverbs 31.10-31

James 3.13-4.3,7-8a

Mark 9.30-37.

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, 'The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.' But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, 'What were you arguing about on the way?' But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.' Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Reflection by David Nye

"What were you arguing about?" Jesus asks his disciples. Peter, James and John had been up the mountain with Jesus where they had witnessed the Transfiguration and had seen Jesus talking to the OT figures of Moses and Elijah. Meanwhile, the other disciples had been left at the bottom and weren't even able to cure a sick boy. You could almost hear Peter saying,

“Well, I’m sure **we** could have done it if we’d been here. But we were busy with Jesus. So there.”

And so the arguments continued about who was the greatest and who was the most important among them.

The real problem was they had lost the plot. They were confused about God’s plan for the world and how this could possibly happen with Jesus who was telling them that he had to die on the cross. Of course, we know the happy ending –but how could they possibly understand? The death of the Messiah just did not make any sense. Yes, we know all that and we nod wisely... but how do live that out?

Whilst the disciples were too embarrassed to admit all this to Jesus, he certainly knows what is going on. So Jesus, as so often, uses a symbol: a small child. A child who is utterly unconcerned about tomorrow; utterly unconcerned about status: utterly unconcerned about hierarchy. But it is precisely these little ones with whom Jesus identifies. “Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not only me but also the one who sent me” (Mark 9:37).

In other words, the way to God and his kingdom is not through power and might and vanity but through the weak and the vulnerable, through the neglected and through those like helpless little children.

We have to accept that in one way or another, we continually get distracted by the notion of our own self-importance and superiority, by jockeying for position, by competing to go first, by trying to get the best place. We lay great stress on self- fulfilment and the full development of our personality. We are sucked into a world of materialism that promises to bring happiness and power and status. Yet its real outcome is to put us further from the kingdom of God.

Jesus tells us that we have to forget all that and realise that if we claim to be his disciples, then we need to be known for being humble, for being loving and for being generous. It is we who should be serving the tramp and the dinner lady and the immigrant and not expecting them to serve us.

True greatness, Jesus says, is not to be above others, but to be the least of all and the servant of all. It is not to ascend the social ladder but rather descend it, taking the lowest place. It is not to seek the company of the powerful, but to welcome and care for those without status, for those without a voice, such as the child that Jesus embraces and places before his disciples.

And if that all sounds frightening and impossibly difficult, then yes, you're right, it is. But looked at in another way, it can be very liberating. Once we understand that, we do not need to struggle to be the best, to be important, to be the greatest. We do not need to be at the centre of everything, trying to prove we are indispensable. As soon as we let go of this desperate obsession with ourselves and our status, we are where God wants us to be – beloved, chosen and free. Just like helpless children we are welcomed and accepted by God.

One other thing.

The disciples really didn't understand what Jesus was saying about the cross and were too afraid to ask what it all meant. Perhaps Jesus is saying to his disciples and to us "I know you don't understand what I mean and that it's frightening. It's too soon for you to see the whole picture. But just as I'm holding this child safely so I will hold you safely as you grow in understanding. Don't be ashamed of not understanding, don't be afraid to ask. I will welcome you as God's child and if you can welcome others as God's children you will be welcoming God himself into your life."

Prayers

Collect for this Sunday

Lord of creation,
whose glory is around and within us:
open our eyes to your wonders,
that we may serve you with reverence
and know your peace at our lives' end,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen

O God, our sovereign and our shepherd,
who brought again your Son Jesus Christ from the valley of death,
comfort us with your protecting presence
and your angels of goodness and love,
that we also may come home
and dwell with him in your house for ever. Amen.

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love.
In Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen

Parish Prayers for the week ahead

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer for:

Sunday	The Church of the Province of Uganda
Monday	The Parish of the Falkland Islands – Extra Provincial to the Archbishop of Canterbury
Tuesday	The Diocese of False Bay – The Anglican Church of Southern Africa
Wednesday	The Diocese of Fianarantsoa – The Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean
Thursday	The Diocese of Florida – The Episcopal Church
Friday	The Diocese of Central Florida – The Episcopal Church
Saturday	The Diocese of Southeast Florida – The Episcopal Church

In our Diocesan Cycle of Prayer:

Sunday	Parish of Chorleywood, St Andrew (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Monday	Parish of Croxley Green, All Saints (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Tuesday	Parish of Croxley Green, St Oswald (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Wednesday	Parish of Mill End and Heronsgate with West Hyde (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Thursday	Parish of Rickmansworth (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Friday	Parish of Sarratt (Deanery of Rickmansworth)
Saturday	Parish of Bletsoe (Deanery of Sharnbrook)

For the homes and families in:

Sunday	Ennis Close, Fairmead Avenue
Monday	Fairway Close, Field Close
Tuesday	Fovant Close, Gordon's Walk
Wednesday	Gorselands, Grange Court Road
Thursday	Green Lane Close, Greenway
Friday	Grove Avenue, Grove Road
Saturday	Hadleigh Court, Hammondswick

The Sick:

Claire, Sue, Christine, Hermione, Karen, Chris, Paul, Tamsin, Mike and all whose names are entered on our St Luke's Cell Prayer List.

For the recently deceased:

Enid Giles

On their year's mind:

Susan Scrivener, Mary Sketchley, Moray McMillin, David Freeman, Vera Millard, Patricia Morris, Kathleen O'Dell, Michael Hopper, Betty Warltier.

Church Opening times:**Other services / in Church congregation**

- Morning Prayer Monday – Thursday at 9.30 am
- Evening Prayer Monday – Thursday at 5.00pm
- Wednesday 11.00 am Midweek Communion
- Sunday 9.30am Parish Eucharist
- Short Family service today at 4.00 pm- begins with tea (BYO) in the Vicarage garden at 3.00pm
- First Sunday of each month at 8.00 am Holy Communion (In Lady Chapel)

Private Prayer

- Saturday and Sunday 11.00am – 4.00pm
- Wednesday 9.00am – 5.30pm

A reminder... of this phone service:

Daily Hope – dial 0800 804 8044 for prayer, reflection, music and worship services from the Church of England. A weekly service is available from 9 am every Sunday.

Church at home:

We are delighted to produce each week these printed papers. If you would prefer not to receive these papers each week, please let Julie in the parish office know. If you are aware of others in the parish who would also value the opportunity to worship at home in this way, do please contact a member of the Ministry team or Julie (Parish Office Tel: 01582 712776).