

Reflections for 15th November 2020 – 2nd Sunday before Advent

Becoming Yourself

I have a favourite story from a book I have read and re-read over the years, in which a wise older monk is offering advice to a younger man:

“Do you know the story of Rabbi Zusya?” he asked. “He was a teacher who lived in the 1700s. One day he said, ‘When I get to the heavenly court, God will not ask me ‘Why weren’t you Moses?’ Rather he will ask me, ‘Why were you not Zusya?’ ”

At this time in our church year, as we approach the season of Advent, our Bible readings encourage us to reflect on the traditional themes of judgement and hope. The parable in this week’s gospel is ‘the parable of the talents’ – the story of a master entrusting parts of his wealth to three servants while he is away.

In the parable the first two servants are commended because they had been about their master’s business during his long absence, putting to good use the gifts he had entrusted to each of them. But the other servant was so fearful that he had just buried the money he was given in the ground – he hadn’t lost it, but he was judged because he had not made good use of the gifts entrusted to him.

The parable prompts us to reflect on the gifts and talents that God has entrusted to us, and whether we have put them to use in the way we should. In the quotation I began with, Rabbi Zusya is tempted to judge himself by comparing himself with the great patriarch Moses. But the lesson for him, and for us, is that, although we can be challenged and encouraged by the example of other people, we are not called by God to be somebody else. So, if we think about ‘judgement’, perhaps we are judged, not by whether we have been like somebody else, but by whether we have been, and become, the unique person that God has made us to be.

The gospel – the good news – is that God’s love shown to us in Jesus Christ can set us free to become fully ourselves.

Revd John Waller

Father God,
you long for the world’s salvation:
stir us from apathy, and revive a new hope in us,
that we and all creation will be healed and made new
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings: Zephaniah 1. 7, 12-18; 1 Thessalonians 5. 1-11; Matthew 25. 14-30

Story: ‘Big Bags of Money’ (based on the gospel parable)