



15th November 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I'm not keen on the lectionary readings at this time of year. All that judgement, doom and destruction. Its tempting to skip through them and jump to Advent.

When my friend's daughter, Poppy, was little she was terrified of Santa. No amount of sweets or bribes helped. I'm not sure whether it was the beard. The thought of a stranger in her bedroom. Or the idea that Santa had a team of spy-elves and kept a secret list of who was naughty and who was nice. Let's be honest, we all live our lives as a mixture of both. Poppy's mum told her that every time she was naughty Santa would take a toy out of her 'stocking' and replace it with a pair of pants. Christmas morning was a gamble. When Poppy was eight Santa brought lovely presents. But she always wondered what had been taken out to make room for 23 pairs of gift-wrapped pants!

This week's gospel reading is the parable of the talents. The master entrusts his servants to take care of his property in his absence. Two invest well and are rewarded. One does not try. When the master returns home this servant returns the initial capital. His excuse is that he was paralysed by fear of failure. The master accuses the slave of wickedness and laziness. If the servant was frightened by the master's reputation for harsh judgement his fear should have made him productive. The slave is punished.

At first glance this might seem to have little to do with Poppy's Santa-phobia. Bear with me...

Some of you may have met my lovely friend Audrie. Audrie is one of the kindest people I've ever met. She is faithful and faith-filled. Her love for Jesus shines out in everything she says and does. So, I was surprised to discover that she was frightened of the Holy Spirit. Or as she knows him, the Holy Ghost).

To me the Holy Spirit is a teacher, comforter, gift-giver and guide. Audrie, a child of the 1930s, believes that the Holy Ghost spies on you. He reports every mistake to God the Father who will punish you. No wonder she was terrified.

As Christians I wonder if we aren't tempted to fall into two camps when we think of the final judgement. Some, like Audrie, trembling with guilt and fear of. Others, like me, overconfident of God's forgiveness. At this time of year our readings remind us that the truth is neither.

We are, as Paul writes, saved by faith in Jesus and not by any good things we have done (Eph 2:8). But it is our deeds ('fruits' Gal 5:22-23) that reveal what we really have faith in. It is easy to talk about forgiveness and generosity. It is far harder to forgive those who hurt us and share the things we have worked for. Hard as they are the readings at this time of year are an important warning. One day I have to explain to Jesus not what I intended to do, but what I actually did (Rev 11:18, 20:13).

I'd rather be unwrapping pants.

Louise Annison



NOTICES

Holy Trinity Blacon are the living church of our living God, and we continue to be at work here! If you are able, do check the parish website www.holytrinityblacon.org (especially the Coronavirus Support page) or our Facebook page (holytrinityblacon) for updates.

SUNDAY WORSHIP We are unable to meet together for worship during the national lockdown, but do join us for video worship each Sunday which will be available through our website, and also on our Facebook page.

CHURCH OPEN FOR PRAYER we are able to open the church for private prayer. It is open *each Thursday 3-4pm* for private prayer.

PRAYING FOR BLACON Louise and Tina are taking our exercise particularly along those streets we are praying for each week. Do join us in praying for those residents. This week we pray for: *Shelley Road, Coleridge Close, Stearns Close & Housman Close*

CHRISTMAS PLANS Inspired by the NHS rainbows around the place, what if we put scenes from the nativity in our windows this Christmas? Try www.housingaforest.com/stained-glass-nativity/ for inspiration and there are lots of printable nativity silhouettes free on the internet. Let us know if you plan to take part, so we can form a trail around Blacon.

CHRISTMAS MEAL we are joining with Avenue Services to deliver a Christmas Dinner for Blacon residents on Thursday 17th December. If you would like one, or know someone who you think would enjoy one, please contact Kerry on managerblaconbeacon@gmail.com or 07851870078 We will also be delivering a Christmas Dinner to families on Tuesday 22nd December, more details to follow soon.

JOIN US FOR EVENING PRAYER every Wednesday at 5pm via Zoom. This will continue for the foreseeable future. If you are not on the internet, it is possible to join us over the telephone – please contact us in advance if you would like to do that.

BIBLE GROUP continues to meet each Thursday evening at 7.30pm via Zoom. We are currently working through the letter to the Philippians. Do let us know if you would like a link to join.

DAILY HOPE is a free phone line for hymns, prayers and reflections – 0800 804 8044

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