



A sermon for the Third Sunday after Trinity

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28 June 2020

- [Genesis 22:1-14](#)
- [Matthew 10:40-42](#)

I speak in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Greetings. I am delighted to be joining you once more here in the diocese on this, the Third Sunday after Trinity. I want to share a few words with you from our Gospel reading and later on also from our Old Testament reading. The words form our Gospel in Matthew Chapter 10: “Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the prophet’s reward. And whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of a righteous person.”

I sometimes feel that, as the people of God, we have forgotten what it means to have a ministry of welcome. What would it really look like if we exercised that ministry of welcome? What are we saying to another person when we welcome them? I’d like to suggest a couple of things.

First of all, let me suggest that in a ministry of welcoming we are acknowledging the other. We are saying: “You are not invisible, you are present, you are here and I can see you.” And that is important. There are too many people in our communities, in our world, who are simply invisible. And if they are invisible, it means that we do not allow ourselves to see them – and the predicament that they are in. I have a habit – and I like the fact that it is a habit – whenever I see an elderly person standing, leaning against a wall, I always stop. If I’m driving, I also stop. I go to them and I say, “Excuse me, are you OK?” Most of the time they look a little bit bewildered! But more often, they will say, “Yes, I’m fine, thank you,” and occasionally they will say, “I’m not feeling very well.” And then it gives me the opportunity to say, “Can I help you?”





On a few occasions, I have put them in my car and driven them to their home, to put their bags, just inside the door, make sure they're alright, and then I would go about my business. But this began actually when I started at college in Blackheath. I was 18 years old. What I didn't know was that there was a place called an 'Old People's home'. I didn't know that, we didn't have those things then in Jamaica. Our elderly folks stayed at home in the community. What I noticed, when I came out of the college compound, that there would often be elderly people, just leaning against the wall and I would stop and say, "Excuse me, are you OK? Can I help you?" The ministry of welcome is about recognising the other, enabling others around us to know that they are visible. And by saying that they are visible, we are actually saying that we care, we care. That ministry of welcome is important.

But that ministry is also, not just saying I recognise you – it is also saying, "You are important." What an amazing and wonderful message for someone to have. I recall on a number of occasions going into a church where no one spoke to me from the time I entered into the building until it was time for me to leave. And, being Rose Hudson-Wilkin, I would always say, "Excuse me, may I speak to the churchwarden?" And I would say to them, "I have walked into your building. No one greeted me, no one smiled at me, no one spoke to me." On one occasion, the churchwarden thought that she would be rather cute. And she said to me, "But I don't know if you're a visitor, there are lots of visitors here." And I smiled and I said, having looked around, "Actually, I'm the only one in the congregation who looks like this. So actually, it's pretty obvious that I'm a visitor."

I guess what I am saying is, I do not want anyone to walk into any of our buildings and to not feel that they are welcome. I want them to feel that they are recognised, that they are made to feel special. Because we are children of God. And that is important to me. "Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me." When we welcome, we don't know, we might think, "Oh that's just an ordinary person." But we might be welcoming something more than. It is our responsibility as the people of God to be generous, generous with our welcome. When we are like that, when we are generous with our welcome, people will know. People will know and have a sense that they belong. And that's what we need people to feel who come





into our buildings, that they belong, that they are a part of.

So I want us today to commit ourselves on this third Sunday after trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is not a lonely journey – this is something we do together. We do this together in fellowship. We welcome others. And what is more important is that we do not just welcome people who look like us, who speak like us, we do not just welcome people because we think they are part of our heritage. We welcome people simply because they are made in the image of God. If we believe the scriptures, then we believe that God our Heavenly Father created humankind and made them in his image. And so it is our responsibility to ensure that the welcome we give is generous, that the welcome we give is extravagant. “Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me,” our Lord says. So every time we reject someone, every time we walk by on the other side, ignoring, pretending we haven’t seen, being too busy, being too ‘important’ – what we are doing, we are not welcoming God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

But what is important, too, I believe – as we welcome others, they can begin to find and have a sense of being at home, a sense that they belong – and that’s what we want in our churches. We want people to feel that they belong. That’s what we want in our community, in our world, people having this, sense that “We belong here, we are part of.” In recent weeks, we have had protests – not only in this country, not only in the United States of America - but around the world, we have had protests. And at the heart of that protest is actually the cry that says, “We want to belong! We want to be treated as though we belong. We want you to welcome us. But then, when you have welcomed us, we want you to created the space to make room for us, so that we too can take our turn in welcoming others and enabling others to feel a part of.” It is a challenge, I believe for all of us, a challenge for us in the way in which we enable others s the people of God to feel that they have a stake in our churches, in our communities in our society.

Think about when you have seen someone - and you know you have seen them – and yet, whether because you’re busy or whatever, whether because you hold a particular ideology or whatever – you have walked by, you have not extended the warmth of welcome. Jesus wants us to be a people who welcome others in. Jesus





wants us to be a people who embrace all God's children. And if all God's children are not welcomed, if all God's children are not left feeling that they have a stake in this church, in our communities, then they are going to feel disenfranchised. And if they feel disenfranchised, then that is going to be a disruption within our lives together.

You see, we belong together. The Trinity, the unity in Trinity is the example of how we should live and be with one another. One of our Old Testament readings comes from Genesis. And in Genesis Abraham is told to take his son Isaac, and to make an offering, to make a sacrifice. I am going to invite us, the people of God in the Canterbury Diocese, I am going to invite you to take your sacred cows, take the things that you hold dearly, take it to the altar, the altar of God, offer it to God so that God may be able to give us all that heart of joy, that heart of welcome, that heart of embracing one another. Let us sacrifice the things that prevent us from reaching out to one another, from reaching out to all God's children so that all of us, everywhere, will know that we matter, that we exist, that we are loved by God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

You and I as children of God, we are meant to be the channels, the conduits of God's love, of God's amazing welcome. So let's go out and be that. Let's do that. Not just today, let's not just do it to the people who we already know. Let's commit ourselves to do that to the people who come over on our shores here – yes, that is controversial. I want us to think about that. Let us reach out to those who are most vulnerable and let us say, "Welcome!"

My brothers and sisters, let us be the change that we want to see: our changed lives, changing lives with our generous welcome. May God bless you and fill you with his joy, with his welcome, so that you, too, may be able to go out and share that welcome. Amen.

KEEP WELL → KEEP PRAYING → KEEP CONNECTED

