

**Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>. 2021. Trinity 18**

**Genesis 2. 18-24, Psalm 8, Mark 10. 2-16**

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

When my dad died in 1985, my mum said simply, "I loved him; we were pals." I have never forgotten that. My mum hated being alone and didn't want to stay in the house after the funeral. So, she came straight back here with me. We know that there are many lonely people in our society, and that can be very hard.

In the first reading today, having created man's physical world and established the limits of his destiny, God solves his loneliness by creating one, who is his equal. By doing this, he provides an opportunity for human fulfilment. God provides a helper, one who corresponds to him as his opposite. None of the animals can fulfil this function. Man's relationship with his woman involves not only his authority in naming her, but joy in finding her and companionship. She is bone of his bone, she is equal.

Psalm 8 belongs to the evening service in the temple, where the night sky was visible above the open courts of the building. The presence of God is seen as filling the whole earth:

'O Lord our governor, how glorious is your name in all the earth.'

The night sky makes human beings aware of their humanity, and they seem too insignificant to merit the loving care of their Creator.

'What are mortals, that you should be mindful of them, mere human beings that you should seek them out?'

But human beings have a crown of kingly dignity (we had a dignity committee in my mum's care home). This places them just below the level of God himself.

'You have made them little lower than the angels and crown them with glory and honour.'

The crown of dignity, however, is a gift of God, as is their mastery of the world, in which they live. All this leads not to pride, but to praise in the majestic nature of God. The refrain is repeated at the end of the psalm:

'O Lord our governor, how glorious is your name in all the earth.'

The first part of the Gospel is not easy. A man could divorce his wife under Jewish law, but then she didn't have the same rights and had no legal protection. So, she would be likely to struggle without support and protection. The relationship, described in the first reading, would be broken. For us, the sad part is the loss of intimacy and consequent loneliness.

Underlying all this is the question of togetherness. The second part of today's Gospel illustrates this. The matter of the disciples' needing an explanation is typical of Mark, who frequently criticises them for their lack of understanding.

This section shows that it is about being blessed and so becoming part of the kingdom of God. Jesus doesn't condemn. He takes an ordinary child, blesses it and, by so doing, brings it into his family. He shows that we are created by God for relationship. First of all, relationship with God, as in this hymn:

When Christ was lifted from the earth  
his hands outstretched above  
to every culture, every birth  
to draw an answering love.

Then, relationship with those, with whom we are close, where we have to be open and honest, if we are to lead fulfilling lives.

Finally, relationship with those around us. Sometimes we can be judgemental and harsh, sometimes we find it hard to get on with some people. But they also are blessed by Jesus and they need our blessing, too.

If we look at it that way, we shall find ourselves changed and our lives within the community, (church, school, work) will be transformed. If we can look at what is good in other people, rather than always seeing the bad, talking behind their backs or criticising, we shall find a new relationship, and like that child, whom Jesus picked up, we shall be blessed. After all, we were not made to be alone, but to find joy in our relationship with other people.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.