

HOMILY – 25TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 24 SEPTEMBER 2017

Isaiah 55: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts
Matt 20: 1-16 'Parable of the Workers'

In the Gospel, Jesus blows away our thinking. He uses a parable to describe the Kingdom of Heaven that shows it is beyond our imagination, to awaken our soul!

The point is that God thinks differently to the way mankind thinks.

We think in terms of a fair wage for a fair day's work. But the Kingdom of Heaven is much more than a job and the criteria for entry into His Kingdom is beyond our reckoning. It is about our whole life and salvation.

This is a Messiah who washes the feet of the Apostles, eats with sinners, lays hands on lepers and declares, you must love God more than your own parents, leave the dead to bury the dead.

In other words, the life of a true Christian often seems bizarre and extreme by human thinking. It's not about self-preservation but a profound liberation in our thinking towards life and relationships. It is rescuing us from being spiritually dead.

Some people sadly see life only about doing the minimum or see if you can get away with thieving, stealing and telling lies. Others treat their careers as just a job, do what you have to do and claim your wages at the end of the month, no loyalty!

Others see life as drudgery, chore and routine. In a sense, boring and predictable. So why make any effort to earn any more than your wage?

But, this is a big deception. Jesus is not teaching merely about jobs. He is referring to the 'Vineyard of Life'. That the whole of life is precious. We should marvel at its endless possibilities, neither taking what we can, like people running into a burning house, instead we should give it all we've got and encourage others to do the same. Never to underestimate what can be achieved through faith. Sin and selfishness deprives people of reaching their potential.

If we approach religion merely for what we want to get out of it, then that can be very minimalistic. Those who just turn up for the minimum occasions, to get a child Baptised, to make First Communion or to exchange Marriage vows and then disappear thereafter. Then it is no surprise that our Catholic Faith does not mean a lot to us. Or the student teacher who only befriends the priest to get a reference for a job in a Catholic School, thereafter never to be seen again.

In essence, Jesus encourages us to be adventuresome in our faith and never underestimate the possibilities of fruition that can come to a committed faith, whether that is entered into in our childhood, twenties, thirties, forties, fifties etc. The rich tapestry of the living Church offers so many exciting and rewarding experiences in we are open to them.

I think of Alex, in his seventies, now travelling to Lourdes, on the Jumbulance – 1,000 miles. I think of Megan, not long back from Malawi, building schools for children in Africa. I think of Jackie, married five times, one husband murdered, now an auditor on the Scottish Catholic Marriage Tribunal. I think of

Martin, working in a shoe shop in Jedburgh, now studying in Rome to be a priest. I think of Adam, just made his First Communion, now serving on the altar at Mass. I think of Neil, now over 90 years old, driving to Mass in his Fiat Punto. I think of Margaret, at 76 yrs old, going to help in Bosnia.

As the prophet Isaiah says very beautifully, 'Seek the Lord while He is to be found, for my thoughts are not your thoughts, my ways not your ways, as the Heavens are as high above the earth'.

Jesus invites us to think the unthinkable, to be full of the Spirit and constantly see life in a new light. Let the beauty of the Church, the revelation of Scripture and the lives of the Saints, inspire you to be bold, to be strong and take heart!

Step up to the mark, don't look for excuses to opt out of your Catholic faith, that is the road to Hell. You reap what you sow! Instead, recognise, like St Paul, that life is Christ. It is Him that brings all meaning and hope to our existence. Reaching our potential and becoming a crazy anachronism to our secular world which merely sees people as a success or a failure.

God Bless you all.

Amen