



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

1 - 6 JUNE 2020

## INTRODUCTION

The Easter season of the Church's year ends at Pentecost so this week marks a return to what is known as Ordinary Time which runs until All Saints' Day at the beginning of November. The order of service is different for each day of the week but the NT readings for Morning Prayer continue their progress through Luke's Gospel; each day's thought is based mainly on the parts of the readings in bold type.

## MONDAY - Luke 9:18-27

<sup>18</sup> Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' <sup>19</sup> They answered, 'John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.' <sup>20</sup> He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered, 'The Messiah of God.'

<sup>21</sup> He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, <sup>22</sup> saying, '**The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.**'

<sup>23</sup> **Then he said to them all, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.** <sup>24</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. <sup>25</sup> What does it profit them if they gain the whole world, but lose or forfeit themselves? <sup>26</sup> Those who are ashamed of me and of my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. <sup>27</sup> But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.'

## ***Thought for the day***

*Peter's unexpected recognition of who Jesus was (the Messiah of God, the Christ, God's anointed one - v20) ought to have been a cause for celebration. Instead Jesus needs to alter his friends' expectation of what this means, both for him and for them. He will not be Messiah in the traditional sense of military and political leader of the Jewish nation. In the interests of something much greater he will give up his life for everyone's sake. And his disciples have been called purposely to do the same - to take up their cross daily (v23). This is a figure of speech, but not just a figure of speech. As many of our fellow-Christians in other countries can testify, following Jesus is still often a matter of life and death. Choose life (Deuteronomy 30:19; John 10:10) but face death (Revelation 7:14).*

## TUESDAY - Luke 9:28-36

<sup>28</sup> Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. <sup>29</sup> And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. <sup>30</sup> Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. <sup>31</sup> They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. <sup>32</sup> Now Peter and his

companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. <sup>33</sup> Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. <sup>34</sup> While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. <sup>35</sup> Then from the cloud came a voice that said, '**This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him.**' <sup>36</sup> When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

### ***Thought for the day***

*In Luke's account of Jesus' baptism by John, God appears to speak directly and only to Jesus as the Holy Spirit descended on him: You are my Son whom I love ... (Luke 3:22). Who then was the Transfiguration for? Well first it must have also been for Jesus, to confirm through the agency of the greatest OT prophets Moses and Elijah, that what he had told his disciples (in yesterday's passage - v22) was exactly God's will for him. But also for the three disciples, on behalf of the rest, and on our behalf too, this was confirmation of Jesus' words: This is my Son ... listen to him (v36). We'll probably never have as dramatic a revelation as this, but there are many times in our lives when, if we're willing to listen, God will speak straight into our hearts and minds.*

### **WEDNESDAY - Luke 9:37-50**

<sup>37</sup> On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. <sup>38</sup> Just then a man from the crowd shouted, 'Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. <sup>39</sup> Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. <sup>40</sup> I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' <sup>41</sup> Jesus answered, 'You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.' <sup>42</sup> While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. <sup>43</sup> And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

While everyone was amazed at all that he was doing, he said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup> 'Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands.' <sup>45</sup> But they did not understand this saying; its meaning was concealed from them, so that they could not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

**<sup>46</sup> An argument arose among them as to which one of them was the greatest. <sup>47</sup> But Jesus, aware of their inner thoughts, took a little child and put it by his side, <sup>48</sup> and said to them, 'Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest.'**

<sup>49</sup> John answered, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us.' <sup>50</sup> But Jesus said to him, 'Do not stop him; for whoever is not against you is for you.'

### ***Thought for the day***

*When the history of the current pandemic comes to be written, what will be the enduring messages that survive? Of course there will be the strategy of politicians and their advisers to combat the disease and the qualities of the decisions made in pursuit of that strategy. But surely we will not forget our debt to those - the nurses and doctors, care-workers, those who kept our essential services going - who put themselves at risk to protect and preserve others. In a time of crisis we have been reminded that our normal assessment of groups and types of people, based on earnings or perceived status, falls far short of their contribution to our own and our society's well-being. Only time will tell whether our*

*recognition of this truth will survive a return to normality. Jesus' teaching in today's reading reminds us how hard it is to set aside our competition for falsely-based esteem.*

## **THURSDAY - Luke 9:51-62**

<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.

<sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him. **On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; <sup>53</sup> but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?'** <sup>55</sup> **But he turned and rebuked them.** <sup>56</sup> Then they went on to another village.

<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.' <sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' <sup>59</sup> To another he said, 'Follow me.' But he said, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.' <sup>60</sup> But Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.' <sup>61</sup> Another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but let me first say farewell to those at my home.' <sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'

### ***Thought for the day***

*After yesterday's reminder from Jesus about the wrong-headedness of arguing about greatness, we find James and John wanting to abuse their power in another badly judged way. It was so recently that Jesus had sent the disciples out with the commission to proclaim God's kingdom and to heal (Luke 9:2 from last Saturday's reading). They were not required to judge or condemn, let alone destroy, those who were unresponsive. But still their model was that of arbitrary and cruel power exercised by secular rulers. Jesus rebuked James and John, two of his closest friends. He will rebuke us also if we ever use our faith as a reason for judging and condemning others - we have enough to do to deal with the log in our own eye (Luke 6:42).*

## **FRIDAY - Luke 10:1-16**

<sup>1</sup> After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. <sup>3</sup> Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. <sup>4</sup> Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road.

<sup>5</sup> Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" <sup>6</sup> And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.

<sup>7</sup> Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. <sup>8</sup> **Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; <sup>9</sup> cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you."** <sup>10</sup> But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near." <sup>12</sup> I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.

<sup>13</sup> 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>14</sup> But at the judgement it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you.

<sup>15</sup> And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hades. <sup>16</sup> 'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.'

## ***Thought for the day***

*Jesus expands the group of missionaries beyond the Twelve to a larger group but the message is the same simple one: the good news of God's kingdom and healing. The simplicity is emphasised by his practical instructions which leave them vulnerable to the whims of those they meet. As with James and John yesterday, their role is not to judge and condemn. To the extent that there is judgement to be exercised, it remains God's prerogative (v12-15). When we have the chance to talk to non-Christians about our faith, do we take it, or do we avoid it?*

## **SATURDAY - Luke 10:17-24**

<sup>17</sup> The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' <sup>18</sup> He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. <sup>19</sup> See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

<sup>21</sup> At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. <sup>22</sup> **All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.**'

<sup>23</sup> Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. <sup>24</sup> For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.'

## ***Thought for the day***

*The outcome of their own efforts surprised the seventy, but not Jesus; his absolute confidence in God's ability to work through him and through those he commissions is clear from his prayer in v21 and 22. And he goes on to remind the disciples of the privilege they enjoy of being with him, and seeing God revealed in him. Through our own familiarity with such ideas they probably don't strike us as extraordinary as they were when Jesus first set them out. But that privilege given to the disciples is ours too, simply for the taking. We also have access to truths and understanding that even prophets and kings never saw. As we reach the end of another week, we might reflect on how we value that privilege, and on the response it evokes in us.*