



## Parish of Finchampstead and California

# THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

13 - 18 JULY 2020

## INTRODUCTION

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. This week starts with what we now call Palm Sunday. Normally we focus on this and the subsequent events towards the end of Lent. Reading these familiar accounts in the middle of summer may give us a chance to see things in them that might pass unnoticed in Holy Week.

## MONDAY - Luke 19:28-40

<sup>28</sup> After he had said this, Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. <sup>29</sup> When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, <sup>30</sup> saying, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>31</sup> If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" just say this: "The Lord needs it."' <sup>32</sup> So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. <sup>33</sup> As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, 'Why are you untying the colt?' <sup>34</sup> They said, 'The Lord needs it.'

<sup>35</sup> Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. <sup>36</sup> As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. <sup>37</sup> As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, **the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, <sup>38</sup> saying, 'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven.'**

<sup>39</sup> Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, order your disciples to stop.' <sup>40</sup> He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.'

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

*Luke is the only Gospel writer who includes the words 'Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven' in the crowd's acclamation of Jesus. They are too similar to the words of the angels to the shepherds (2:14) to be coincidental. Their repetition here draws attention to the constancy of God's plan for Jesus as he starts the last week of his life. God is constant also in each of our own lives, only we often don't realise it. Today would be a good day to reflect on God's constancy to us, and thank him for it.*

## TUESDAY - Luke 19:41-48

<sup>41</sup> As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, <sup>42</sup> saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace. But now they are hidden from your eyes. <sup>43</sup> **Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side.** <sup>44</sup> **They will**

**crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'**

<sup>45</sup> Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; <sup>46</sup> and he said, 'It is written, "My house shall be a house of prayer"; but you have made it a den of robbers.'

<sup>47</sup> Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; <sup>48</sup> but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard.

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

*Verses 43 and 44 are a typical prophetic utterance, worthy of one of the OT prophets. And we know it came true within a generation of Jesus' death - Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans and utterly destroyed in AD70. And by his immediate action to cleanse the temple, Jesus located the underlying sin in the hearts and behaviour of the chief priests, scribes and leaders (v47). There are prophetic voices in our own time (for example about climate change) and some charge the leaders of the nations with failure to act. Christians must pay careful attention to such voices and respond to them. Where else are they to be found?*

## **WEDNESDAY - Luke 20:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> One day, as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple and telling the good news, the chief priests and the scribes came with the elders <sup>2</sup> and said to him, 'Tell us, by what authority are you doing these things? Who is it who gave you this authority?' <sup>3</sup> He answered them, 'I will also ask you a question, and you tell me: <sup>4</sup> Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?' <sup>5</sup> They discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say, "From heaven", he will say, "Why did you not believe him?" <sup>6</sup> But if we say, "Of human origin", all the people will stone us; for they are convinced that John was a prophet.' <sup>7</sup> So they answered that they did not know where it came from. <sup>8</sup> **Then Jesus said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.'**

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

*Journalists and reporters often try to trick public figures into making damaging statements (for example 'When did you stop beating your wife?'). Jesus neatly sidesteps the question by offering a negotiated quid pro quo. But what is not in doubt at all is that Jesus had authority. If that was so then, surely it remains so now. Few Christians would doubt that that authority comes from God. But sometimes it's a difficult step to make from knowing that in our minds to receiving it into our hearts and acting on it's implications for our attitudes and behaviour.*

## **THURSDAY - Luke 20:9-19**

<sup>9</sup> He began to tell the people this parable: 'A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. <sup>10</sup> When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. <sup>11</sup> Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. <sup>12</sup> And he sent yet a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. <sup>13</sup> Then the owner of the vineyard said, "What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him." <sup>14</sup> But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, "This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours." <sup>15</sup> So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? <sup>16</sup> He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.' When they heard this, they said, 'Heaven forbid!' <sup>17</sup> But he looked at them and said, '**What then does this text**

**mean: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone"?**

**<sup>18</sup> Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.'** <sup>19</sup> When the scribes and chief priests realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people.

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

*In each of the incidents this week, the temperature rises. Each one builds on the previous ones and magnifies them. Here Jesus provokes his opponents (again) in a parable which is unsubtle and unsparing. They knew it and were furious. They fully intended to crush him, and later thought they had. But Jesus knew his Bible and used the quote about the cornerstone (Psalm 118:22) to explain their folly. We know the truth of that now, but I often wonder whose side I would have been on if I'd witnessed the original confrontation. Jesus was a charismatic leader and preacher, but the chief priests were the properly appointed representatives of the people. Do we prefer radical opinions or political stability?*

### **FRIDAY - Luke 20:20-26**

<sup>20</sup> The scribes and chief priests watched Jesus and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said, so as to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. <sup>22</sup> Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' <sup>23</sup> But he perceived their craftiness and said to them, <sup>24</sup> 'Show me a denarius. Whose head and whose title does it bear?' They said, 'The emperor's.' <sup>25</sup> **He said to them, 'Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.'** <sup>26</sup> And they were not able in the presence of the people to trap him by what he said; and being amazed by his answer, they became silent.

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

*Another trick question (see Wednesday) but a much more dangerous one because either Jesus would show himself to be outside God's law, discrediting him in the eyes of the people, or outside Roman law, making him a rebel. Again he avoids the trap, but in doing so left his followers down the ages with the difficult task of distinguishing what things are Caesar's and what God's(v25). What tools should we use to help ourselves with the task?*

### **SATURDAY - Luke 20:27-40**

<sup>27</sup> Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus <sup>28</sup> and asked him a question, 'Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. <sup>29</sup> Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; <sup>30</sup> then the second <sup>31</sup> and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. <sup>32</sup> Finally the woman also died. <sup>33</sup> In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.'

<sup>34</sup> **Jesus said to them, 'Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage <sup>35</sup> but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.** <sup>36</sup> Indeed they cannot die any more, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. <sup>37</sup> And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. <sup>38</sup> Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.' <sup>39</sup> Then some of the scribes answered, 'Teacher, you have spoken well.' <sup>40</sup> For they no longer dared to ask him another question.

## **Thought for the day**

*The Sadducees were the most powerful of Jesus' opponents as it was they who provided the temple chief priests and administration. They interpreted the Law in a much more literal way than many Pharisees. Their question attempts to discredit any idea of life after death by making it appear ridiculous. But Jesus explains in verses 34 and 35 that they are starting from a false assumption. In his answer we get a brief glimpse of what heaven is like and how it differs from life on earth. We might wish he had said more but, as the tensions of his final week continue to grow, and as we wrestle with serious tensions in our own world brought into sharp relief by the Covid-19 pandemic, it may be timely for us to lift our thoughts to heaven. Above everything else it's the place where we will come face to face with God and Jesus (see Revelation 4 and 7:9-17).*

JRE / 29.6.20