

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
28th September 2021**

READINGS

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Matthew 25:31-46

REFLECTION

I was out visiting someone one day and in the course of the visit they said, "I really can't be involved in the Church". Somewhat surprised, I asked, "Why not?" "Because I have nothing to offer", came the reply.

Here was a person who honestly felt that they had no gifts and talents to bring to our Church family. Thinking about that I realise that it's not such an unusual opinion. If truth be told, many of us don't like to push ourselves to the forefront. We are shy about admitting our gifts and our talents. We wonder what 'little old me' could possibly do for 'the great big God'.

Jesus, responding to a question, told how on his return to this world people would be blessed because they had fed him and cared for him. Some of these people respond to him saying "*Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?*" and Jesus replied "*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*" (Matthew 25:37-40). Jesus' answer reminds us that there are so many ways that each of us can serve, so many things that each of us can do for God. Regardless of how lacking in 'specialness' we feel.

I once heard a story about the president of the Paralympic Games who was speaking to a large audience. After his talk there was a question-and-answer time during which someone asked him to describe his best moment as president. Without hesitation he told the audience about an event for young people with special needs that he had been asked to attend. Some of these young people might be the very athletes who would go on to compete at the highest levels in the Paralympics. He told the story of the 100 metre sprint race final in which six young people with various disabilities lined up at the start line. They had trained all year for this moment, and in the midst of a stadium filled with people they were excited. Each wanted to win, each wanted to give of their best effort. The gun sounded and the race began. At about the 50-metre mark, one of the runners stumbled and fell face first onto the track. The other runners took a couple more steps and then one by one stopped. They looked back and saw the fallen runner. Then, to the amazement of the crowd, they all went back, helped the fallen runner to his feet, joined hands, and continued the race - all of them crossing the line at the same time. Each one of them received a gold medal. This, said the president, for him summed up the Paralympic movement.

This wonderful story is also an excellent image of our churches. We are not about competition. We do not concentrate on those who have special gifts and talents and skills which amaze those who gather week by week. Rather, we are a part of a community, the family of God, and each member is precious in our churches. Each person has something to offer, each person something to give and we are all the poorer when they are absent. So yes, you do have gifts and talents, you do have something to contribute to our church, our community, and our lives. In God's eyes you are unique and wonderful, and he loves you. However you feel about yourself, however weak you feel, however unimportant, you have something to offer, and we are all the poorer if you hold it back.

PRAYER

God, all wise, ever loving,
You create in perfect order.
And in your wisdom,
You share with us the work of your kingdom,
Equipping each of us uniquely to take our part.

Help us each to recognise our own calling,
Forgive us if we have been too fearful to accept our own gifting
Too shy or reluctant to push ourselves forward,
Scared of what others will think.

May we each find our place,
May we each know the joy of serving you
May we each have the reward of good and faithful servants.
May we each see your kingdom grow
In our own lives and in the world around us.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

