

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
26th April 2022

READINGS

With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with tens of thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:6-8

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Mark 12:28-34

REFLECTION

It may surprise people to know that I am not the only clergyman in our family. It might surprise people even more to know that my cousin is a Roman Catholic Priest Father Gerry. Some time ago Father Gerry and I met up while I was home visiting family and as usually happens when clergy get together, we ended up talking about our experiences with people.

Father Gerry told me about one of his friends, a parish priest called Father Sean O'Kelly, whose first parish was in the heart of Newark, New Jersey, in the United States of America.

When Father Sean was parish priest, Newark was a place defined by urban blight and by poverty and by hunger. Most shops had closed, unemployment was high and the homes in the community were in poor condition and getting worse.

Father Sean and his parish wanted to do what they could. So they started a food bank, and even delivered emergency food parcels to those who were the poorest and in most dire need.

On one occasion, Father Sean heard that a family in his parish was desperately hungry. Because of a local council error, a mother with five small children had no food and no hope of getting any until the end of the month. Although the family was not Catholic, Father Sean went to Church's food bank store and collected a supply of groceries - three full shopping bags worth. Then he went to the apartment building where the family lived. After carrying the groceries up four flights of stairs and walking down a long hall, he came to the apartment. He rang the doorbell, and a little boy about seven years old answered the door. He looked at Father Sean's clerical collar and the bags of groceries, and then screamed at his mother: "Mama, Mama, come quick. Jesus brought us some food!"

When Father Sean, told my cousin Gerry about the incident, he said, "I will never forget that child's comment. At that moment, I realized that I was the Christ for a hungry child."

We are living now in some of the most trying days for our nation. Food and energy costs have seldom been higher, and so many people are desperate. Individuals and families are having to make difficult choices. I heard from the Instant Neighbour Food Bank which we support through food donations at South Holburn, and they are now starting to ask people to gift only things that can be heated in a microwave in a few moments, because people cannot afford to pay the electricity costs to cook in an oven for 15-20 minutes.

As Christians we have just celebrated the season of Easter. That time when we remember just how much God is willing to give for the love of us. The cross and the empty tomb bear witness to the unlimited, unending generous love of God for us.

But from Easter is the challenge to consider how resurrection hope and the Good News make a daily difference in our lives. That difference is not simply in the way that we pray or the way that we believe. It should also be reflected in our actions.

Perhaps then one thing to consider is to ask how we can be Christ's presence in the world, just as Father Sean experienced when he took food to a hungry family. Goodness knows, there is plenty of need all around us.

I wonder then how we each can be Christ for a hungry person, or Christ for a sad person, or Christ for a lonely person, or Christ for a hurting person?

Amen

PRAYER

God who loves us,
God who dies for us
God who rises for us
God who gives all...
For each of us.

How can we ever begin to thank you
For the love of the cross,
And the good news of the empty tomb?
How can we ever show our gratitude,
That you have forgiven our sins,
And healed our brokenness?

By our devotion,
Our praise, our worship and our prayers.
In this way we show our love,
Never let us wane in our praise
Or shirk our prayer life.

But not by devotion alone do we show our love and our faith,
But also by our lives in the world
Do we share the love of God and the good news of Jesus.

So teach us to be Christ's witnesses,
To be Christ's hands and feet,
To pass on the love of Jesus in the most meaningful and practical ways.
Where there is need, where there is hunger, where there is fear and worry,
let your people be present,
Loving and feeding and caring and comforting.
Show each of us how to care in your name,
Show each of us where to care in your name.
And make our little efforts to be good neighbours sufficient.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

SOUTH HOLBURN CHURCH



CHURCH OF SCOTLAND