

Lamentations 1: 1-6

Psalm 137

2 Timothy 1:1-14

Luke 17:1-10

These sermon notes were prepared before the sermon was delivered and so do not transcribe the actual sermon word for word

The three readings today have a common thread, in that they are all full of feeling.. They give us an invitation to encounter the scriptures emotionally rather than intellectually and that's a helpful reminder, for we often read the scriptures with a wanting to know, rather than being open to feeling what they seek to illuminate.

Before we look at the tear filled lamentation of the first reading, let's first look at the gospel reading. And before we get into it, I want to start with an apology.

I want to apologise to all those mentioned in the "thank You" notices in the service sheet... Pages 4, 7 and 14 all have thank you notices, and I'm sorry...

Let's look at the Gospel from verse 7:

7 "Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here at once and take your place at the table'? 8 Would you not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink'? 9 Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? 10 So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

I'm sorry for the "Thank You" notices in the service sheet, what I meant to say was: 'You worthless slaves, you have only done what you ought to have done'.

And when you hear that, you can feel it; there is a deliberate emotional hook in the gospel message.

And just so that we're all included; to those not thanked in the service sheet:

'You even more worthless slaves, for haven't even done what you ought to have done.

Now that our feelings are engaged, and perhaps outraged; let's sit with the truth that we are reacting to.

And a quote that was shared at our Nanga camp, and oft quoted as used by Nelson Mandela helps to shed some light on our enraged feelings:

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

If we follow the thread that our feelings have exposed; we'll come to the question: 'what is it that we ought to have done?'

What ought we to have done as members of St Paul's?

What ought we to have done as Christians?

What ought we to have done as disciples, members of the Body of Christ?

It has been heard said in this community, that some our older members have "done my bit".

Really? Does that answer resonate with the Gospel; do we really feel the truth of that statement; have we attained the full stature of Christ?

When we gather every Sunday, one of the purposes and the value in our gathering together and participating in the liturgy is to remind ourselves that we are called into a worldview that is very different from the secular worldview.

The secular worldview is un-Eastered, it is bounded by death. It is a life perspective in which you grab all you can while you are able and then decay into a place of retirement, waiting to die.

Our worldview, in the light of Easter is not bounded by death, our life perspective is from the viewpoint of eternity. We have glimpsed that truth through the process of Easter, and so for each and for all, there is still a long way to go.

And that shift in perspective, helps inform what it is we ought to be doing.

Jesus, in teaching his disciples, introduces them to quantum physics. Probably the teachings recorded in today's gospel are the earliest account of quantum physics which scientists today are still excited about, researching and debating.

The disciples wanted to "know"; the term "disciple" is derived from the Greek word *mathetes*, which means a pupil (of a teacher) or an apprentice (to a master craftsman); they are not blind followers they are learners seeking to be like and acquire the knowledge and craft of the master.

And in today's reading they voice their desire for learning; , "*Increase our faith!*"

If we think we've already attained enlightenment and secured ourselves as members of the 'Body of Christ', then let's take a moment to contrast and compare with the measure provided in the gospel; "*If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.*"

What we are learning from quantum physics is that we give shape to the world by what we actually see; it is an amazing shift in our understanding of reality. And in seeing, by our very act of attending, we change the potential into the actual.

Tell me to what you attend and I will tell you who you are. [José Ortega y Gasset]

Jesus is giving the disciples, his students an example of the very real power they have in shaping the unfolding of creation; *“you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”*

2 Timothy, a letter written in the tradition and so carrying the authority of Paul, is very much in tune with the thread we are following; it speaks of Paul being an apostle *“for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus”*.

And that promise of “life” our promise of life, is based on a *“sincere faith”*; Paul then encourages Timothy to *“to rekindle the gift of God that is within”*: and perhaps that what we “ought” to be doing, knowing that we are empowered to give shape, and to reshape creation.

Here we begin our Lament.....

Contemporary laments, the ones we hear every day, and the ones that go round and round in our heads, are not the same as the Lament that we find in the first reading.

Mostly our experience of lamentation, is more correctly known as whingeing.... We let ourselves off the hook because we only look from the perspective of our small self-centred ego. And without realising we’re letting ourselves off the very *“promise of life”* that is referred to in 2 Timothy.

The feeling that we encounter in the first reading is of a much deeper lament; it is a lament, a desire, that is found from the perspective of prayer. And it is answered, or rather we are drawn out of the place of lamentation by a rekindling of *“the gift of God that is within”*.

One of the greatest obstacles to our faith is a childlike need to be accepted... And it does very often present us with cause for lamentation. We want to be liked, accepted and we want to be included....

Feel that lamentation; *“How lonely sits the city that once was full of people! How like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!”*

I feel that Lamentation when I attend synod, a part of me wants to be part of the church that gathers there, but another part of me knows that there is something much more about Church than will ever be realised at Synod, and so I feel outside.

I feel the same lamentation in relation to being Australian, a part of me wants to be ‘seen’ as Australian, but I know I am not one with the un-generous nature that we display to refugees and foreigners in general.

One of the greatest obstacles to our faith is a childlike need to be accepted, Jesus, as our teacher, invites us to look beyond our childlike needs.

We gather today, to rekindle, and in receiving the sacraments, we ritualise, we attend to accepting again the body of Christ. We attend to consuming the Body of Christ, so that we know the gift of God within us...

Tell me to what you attend and I will tell you who you are.

And who you are.... Is the one who holds the unfolding of creation.

That’s why the last line of the reading from 2 Timothy is so important, for we encouraged to: *Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.*

