

Jeremiah 31: 27-34

Psalm 119: 97-104

2 Timothy 3: 10-4:5

Luke 18:1-14

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

What direction do the three readings we have just heard have? It is a good question for us to approach our reading of scriptures, especially if we are looking for direction from 'the word of God'.

Looking, or getting a feel for the direction of the readings gives us a simple approach to the scriptures that requires no other context; we're not yet looking at the content only the arrow, the direction, that is being indicated.

Jeremiah v27: "*The days are surely coming, says the LORD*".

2 Timothy 4 v3: "*For the time is coming*".

And Luke speaks of "*when the Son of Man comes*"; so all three readings have an arrow that points to the future.

Before we even look at the content of the reading we are already invited into a place of contemplation.

Is the arrow of the divine an orientation toward the future; and is that an indication of love's creative activity.

There is a good case that can be made for understanding that the arrow of God is directed toward the unfolding of tomorrow; and that gives us some grounds for experiential conflict.

As we get older we experience 'time running out', the future can begin to lose its attraction, and we, quite understandably, can feel a real desire to hold on to where we are and what we've got, we either want to stay in the present, or even yearn for earlier years. Our experiential desire finds itself in conflict with the divine arrow that points toward the future.

Before developing this line of thought further we might make a mental note to contemplate the arrow of our life experience now. And as we explore the orientation of our own lives, we might be able to identify the 'how when and where' our arrows changed direction, for each and every life surely begins with an arrow pointed toward tomorrow.

There is opportunity for further contemplation as we look for the arrow of the church, and also the arrow of our culture. Our exploring opens up the question of alignment, do the arrows of life, church and culture align with direction that is the "Word of God"?

Now, we still have no looked at the content of the reading, however this is a worthwhile thread to stay with a bit longer.

The arrow of God points toward the future, the unfolding of creation, that is the direction of the divine activity, and so too is the divine direction for each and every life.

In our humanity, our day-to-day experience we understand the future in relation to time, yesterday, today and tomorrow; past, present and future. It is an obvious understanding, it is also a basic, or primitive understanding.

And we find a deeper understanding when we remain with our contemplation of the arrow of God, for that is an arrow not bounded by time, or relative time.

The arrow of God points toward a future that is not measured by time, but by wholeness; the arrow of God points toward oneness, the future of God and the unfolding of creation is the giving of all into the oneness of all.

This view of the future needs to be framed in the paradigm of eternity; it is an ancient understanding, a wisdom that goes beyond our day-to-day experiential encounter of life. And yet it is more real than the life we measure by the ticking clock.

To bring our lives into alignment with the divine arrow, we have to stop watching the clock and rather look for the wholeness and the oneness of all, for there we find our future, and we see the unfolding of creation in the image of God.

Jeremiah speaks of his vision of the future, he sees an alignment of Human and Divine arrows; *“The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. 32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors...”*

Some would read Jeremiah’s vision within the confines of history, ascribing the ‘new covenant’ with the coming of Christ and the Old covenant with God’s promise to Moses.

But there are many ‘old’ covenants, starting with Adam and Eve, then Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Moses and so forth, these ‘covenants’ again have a movement that aligns with the divine direction, or arrow; from the innocence of Eden toward a land of promise, from the slavery of exile toward the freedom of the temple. And today’s vision speaks of a movement from the past, *“It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors”* toward the wholeness of Humanity aligned with Divinity, *“I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”*.

The arrow of God points to our future, for our future is the future; and it is we who carry the divine direction within, written on our hearts.

Now when we reflect on the arrow of our own lives, we no longer look back and forward through the span of time that we have lived, rather we look for the movement, the activity that we engage with in order to create the wholeness and oneness of tomorrow.

In the letter to Timothy, the writer speaks of *“my aim in life”*; and he is urging the readers to persist in finding that same “aim” for themselves.

What aim do you have in your life, when the arrow of your life is sent forth, where is it directed toward?

In the same letter the historical unfolding, the day-to-day clock timed future is described; *“For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths.”*

However, what is also clear from the letter is that the writer does not see his readers as participants in that future, rather, they are aligned to a different unfolding, and so too to a different unfolding of tomorrow, one that will be achieved in following the course outlines in the last verse; *“carry out your ministry fully.*

When Luke reflects on the unfolding of tomorrow, he poses a question: *“when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”*

What is clear from all three readings is that they are written with a common ‘given’, and that is that we are the creator of the future, the ‘new covenant’ places the unfolding of creation within us, rather than in the ‘hand of God’.

The parable that Luke includes at this point provides us with another example of divine alignment, for the Pharisee is representative of the orthodox and accepted position.

And the Tax collector is representative of the ordinary; in fact he represents one that would not normally even be in the temple.

The parable gives us a starting point for aligning our arrows, and that starting point is not to be found in the rules and practices of orthodox institutionalised faith, rather it is found by knowing where we truly stand, who we truly are and what we truly seek.

The quote on the front of the service sheet I first copied off a school wall where it had been painted to inspire students:

*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.*

In the light of today’s readings it illuminates even more, for the “dreams” that it speaks of, might in reality speak of the very different worldview that is offered through faith.

If we see, or even glimpse, the vision of the prophets, the ‘aim in life’ of the disciples and the reality of Christ described in the gospel, then we see beyond the day-to-day as if we were dreaming.

Faith itself is not engaged in the clock-ticking world that is filled with distraction and delusion, rather it is encountered in prayer, for here we find ourselves as we truly are in the temple.

*The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.*

Faith is where our divine dreams are framed... and once framed all we have to do is *“carry out our ministry fully.*

*Peace be with You*

