

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost 13 Sep 2015

Proverbs 1: 20 -33

Psalm 19

James 2: 18-26

Mark 8:27-38

[Proper 19B/Ordinary 24B/Pentecost 16 September 13, 2015](#) Textweek

Of the four readings we've had today, I wonder which one most got your attention; does any one of them stand out and feel more engaging for you? Before even thinking about the content of the reading, I wonder if we're more engaged by the type of reading itself.

Perhaps it is helpful for us to appreciate that when we're reading from 'the Bible', we're not reading from one book, but from many books; just as when we are watching TV we're not always looking at one program.

So perhaps today we have tuned into, or out of, four different programs. The first two readings, from Proverbs and Psalms are obviously from SBS and SBS2, both are quite poetic and engage our artistic rather than scientific senses; both give us a quirky look at life, like some of those late night short films, usually by little known Polish directors.

The New Testament reading, is a re-run of the 7.30 report from a few years ago showing the bitter debate between the 'faith' party and the 'works' party, and demonstrating that the two never seem to agree on anything.

Finally the gospel; another one of those 'days of our lives' episodes and one that has been over-promoted as a 'shocker'; the pre-prime-time hype whetting our appetite with the teaser that Jesus is going to accuse one of his friends as being Satan. We almost can't wait to find out, and of course we all know that it can't be Peter, as Peter is one of Jesus' best, best friends.

So now we have established a different filter, maybe we can more readily explore the actual texts; reading them not as holy words, but rather with that casual interest that we trawl TV channels with; seeking to have our 'little' interest stimulated into 'more' interest.

Turning, or tuning in, to SBS we find ourselves joining a film maybe half way through; and our attention is held by a haunting cry; the film's title 'Proverbial Wisdom' makes us think that this is perhaps wisdom's cry.

The scene itself is almost surreal; a town or city depicted in a blue wash fills the screen, no colour other than blue; the haunting melody of a violin and a cello seems to follow the only movement on the screen, that of a naked woman seeking, searching and crying out with both passion and also desperation.

Without a word spoken, with no script, we know she is crying in anguish, for we all know the voice of life's longing for itself.

The tune moves into a Wagnerian overture, and the background slowly fades; leaving our focus on the woman's cry and the blue wash turns to the colour of the sea. Still wisdom cries as she encounters what emerges from the background and becomes clear; a small three year old boy lying face down on the beach. The tide of war washes over the boy, and the tide of life ebbs away.

Who is this wisdom, this naked woman?

Is this the face of God beyond and before the image of the Almighty father?

Perhaps this is the very Word of God's creation crying into the chaos of life and crying into the grief of life's dying.

Momentarily the veil is lifted, the door of our simplicity is opened and we glimpse beyond the confines of doctrine's blinkers.

Perhaps her eyes and her seeing, her voice and her crying are ours also.

It's all a bit too much, we change channels and are delighted by a more uplifting choral composition; a delightful anthem of creation celebrating the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.

Panoramic scenes of heavens, galaxies, stars and planets, with views of earth taken from outer space interspersed with dramatic landscapes of Australian bush and Pacific beaches.

The sun setting, the moon rising, horizons of Mars, craters of the moon and a close up of bees in a hive producing honey.

There is no speech or language: nor are their voices heard

One day tells it to another: and night to night communicates knowledge.

The lyrics of the anthem start to take root in our thoughts and as the chorus echoes;

We desire to live in love, and in accord with the Divine Glory

So are thoughts are drawn back to the beach of Wisdom's cry.

Maybe again, it is all too much and our soul is tempted away as we seek the Panadol of distraction.

We can rely on the hard factual accounts of the 7.30 report; real reality TV!

'Faith and Works' is the debate, that old chestnut, and our 'knowing' is engaged from the first sentence.

"You believe that God is one"

"faith apart from works is barren"

"it was reckoned to him as righteousness"

There is comfort in those well-known clichés that we've heard a hundred times before. But as our mind wanders into the border of boredom we entertain briefly a tangential thought; what if they are the same?

'Faith' and 'works', not different, but illustrations and aspects of the same; and what if we reverse the order?

What if my works are the reality that describes and determine the reality of my faith. What religion do my works describe and what teacher, what guru and what Christ is reflected in my works?

Enough, let's turn to the soapies, for we're all dying to know who gets dobbed in as Satan; and we're just in time: *"turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."*

We can hardly believe it, after all that's gone on, they were best of friends; what on earth happened, what did we miss; what went wrong?

We already know that in the next series Peter becomes the leader of the Church, so what is going on here, why is he being rebuked?

It can be quite devastating when someone you know and love is suddenly cast in a different light; for we all hold on to that which we know and love..

We wrestle for a moment, not wanting to know the reality of what Jesus has just spoken.

And in that moment of devastation we are again drawn back to Wisdom's beach, the small three year old boy lying face down in the sand has cast us all in a different light....

Wisdom's cry is for us, for we all (like Peter) can be rebuked for *"setting our mind not on divine things but on human things"*