

# Fifth Sunday of Easter 24 April 2016

[John 13: 31-35](#) ; [Revelation 21: 1-16](#) ; [Psalm 148](#) ; [Acts 11: 1-18](#)

## [Easter 5C April 24 2016](#) Textweek

In my reflections this week I have been exploring the language used in Divine communication, the poem "Nuclear" by R.S. Thomas is a great place to start.

### **Nuclear**



It's not that he can't speak;  
who created languages  
but God? Nor that he won't;  
to say that is to imply  
malice. It is just that  
he doesn't, or does so at times  
when we are not listening, in  
ways we have yet to recognise  
as speech. We call him the dumb  
God with an effrontery beyond  
pardon. Whose silence so eloquent  
as his? What word so explosive  
as that one Palestinian  
word with the endlessness of its fall-out?  
R.S. Thomas



"Praise the Lord" the psalmist tells us. I wonder how those words land for you, perhaps like me those words may have been dulled and their power diminished because of their over use. I expect you have heard statements like, "Praise the Lord for my parking bay, or Praise the Lord, for me being first in the queue, or Praise the Lord, for the sunshine on my party", and the my, my, me, me list goes on. The psalmist points us in the opposite direction. The praise in the psalm is a firmly focused movement away from us.... It is a looking toward God, toward the Divine creation that surrounds us;

Praise the Lord from heaven. Praise him, all his angels. Praise him, sun and moon. Praise him, in the highest heavens.

Praise the Lord from the earth. Praise him, hills and mountains.

Praise him, kings and all peoples; young women and young men, old people and children too.

Let us and all creation, Praise the Lord!

Are you a dreamer? Have you ever experienced a truly powerful visual picture in a dream? Dreams have the capacity to reveal to us, from our deepest sub consciousness, truths which we would probably overlook or ignore in our normal day to day consciousness. Today we have heard two dreams, they are very different, however each is full of beautiful yet powerful imagery as told by the dreamer, they are a gift for others to explore.....As theological reflections the dreams can serve as images for us of possibilities and places where we might encounter the Divine.

In Act's we hear Peter retell his dream. It would seem that for all worldly intent and purpose, Peter was happy going along doing more of the same, more of what he had always done. His actions mirrored his assumptions and expectations. Then he had a dream.....and WOW what a dream, a dream which turns his previous assumptions and expectations about God completely upside down. It is a dream full of old foundational assumptions that could only be changed through graphic dream time imagery. Peter saw what he previously believed to be ungodly, as something to be embraced and used by God to transform both him and to transform the wider community's awareness of God. Thus the community was transformed into something far bigger and greater than whatever Peter or the community could ever imagine. It was through his interpretation of his dream and subsequent actions that Peter affirmed God's intention to share the message of Jesus with all.

John also had a dream, a dream we now know as the book of Revelation. I find John's imagery complex in its minute detail, the language and the wording can be difficult, and at times I struggle to make any sense of it. In the context of today's readings I wonder if there are aspects of John's dream that are a deeper, fuller more personal extension of the psalmists, "Praise the Lord" view of the relationship between God & Creation. The psalmist spoke in simple clear language encouraging the whole of creation to acknowledge what is and to give praise to God for it. In contrast John's revelation is a dream image that looks past what is, toward the future, to a new heaven and new earth, a place perfect in its beauty and construct, to a new time when God will be at home with mankind.

"If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples."

I presume you have an idea of what love means for you and therefore you would have a presumption as to what love means to me? Some years ago when our daughter was a teenager our relationship wasn't quite as loving as I thought a father and daughter ought to be. I loved my daughter in a way that I understood as loving and it didn't seem to work. That puzzled me until I read Gary Chapman's book "*The 5 Languages of Love*". According to Gary there are 5 primary ways that we communicate or express our love towards one-another. They are love expressed through; Gifts, Time, Service, Touch and Words. It would seem that each of us is naturally inclined to one of the 5 love expressions as the type of love we expect to receive from others and the love expression we more naturally give to others. In the situation with my daughter I was expressing my love to her in my natural love language but it did not match her natural love language. So my expressions of love were not landing for my daughter. Once I understood this I was able to consciously modify my love language toward her into the love language that she is most naturally attuned to receive – bingo we were in tune.

"If you have love for one another", clearly Jesus is asking the hard question, it is a loaded question with an anticipated answer, of "we do love one-another". I know loving one-another isn't always easy, perhaps in those uneasy situations using a different love language could be the bridge to a more loving relationship?

"As I have loved you, so must you love one another".

In recalling the Gospel reading, I want to draw your attention to how easily Jesus moved to and fro using all 5 Languages of love with the disciples as he spent his final days with them;

"No slave is greater than his master, and no messenger greater than the one who sent him". ...

is Jesus expressing love with service.

"I your lord and teacher"...

.Jesus expressing love with words.

"Jesus and his disciples were at supper"....

Jesus expressing love with time.

"If you ask anything in my name, I will do it"....

Jesus expressing love with gift.

"He poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciple's feet"...

Jesus expressing love with touch.

After modelling love for his disciples Jesus left them with this command.

"As I have loved you, so must you love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples"

Jesus' words, are a challenging call to all of us. It is a simple question really.....do I or do we have the desire to love one another as Jesus taught? And the answer is quite apparent.....Others will either recognise our lack of Christ's love or they will recognise the active presence of Christ's love within us. The choice is ours!

End with the poem "*Nuclear*" by R.S. Thomas

### **Nuclear**



It's not that he can't speak;  
who created languages  
but God? Nor that he won't;  
to say that is to imply  
malice. It is just that  
he doesn't, or does so at times  
when we are not listening, in  
ways we have yet to recognise  
as speech. We call him the dumb  
God with an effrontery beyond  
pardon. Whose silence so eloquent  
as his? What word so explosive  
as that one Palestinian  
word with the endlessness of its fall-out?  
R.S. Thomas



.....That word is Jesus.

What word so explosive as that one Palestinian word with the endlessness of its fall-out.....Jesus, Jesus, Jesus....Amen

Michael Jessup