

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany 29 January 2017

[Micah 6: 1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31; Matthew 5:1-12](#) from Vanderbilt

[Epiphany 4A January 29 2017](#) Textweek

The three readings and the psalm today are all about 'being'. They give us an opportunity to reflect on our perspective of life and our direction in life through the different words of Micah, the Psalmist, Paul and Matthew's account of what Jesus taught.

However, in order to even begin to hear what's being said we have to get these readings out of the baggage of 'bible stories' and try to hear them in a more original form.

We might try to hear them in the same way that we hear and read all the other media that speaks to us of 'being' and living and the whole understanding of life and life's direction.

As a starting point, before even contemplating the words see if you can pick for yourself which of the four forms of media most appeals to you, which style or character do you more readily identify with?

The first reading from Micah has a 'Lord of the Rings' or 'Harry Potter' quality about it. The setting is an ethereal courtroom where we are asked to enter a plea before the jury of mountains and hills and the "*enduring foundations of the earth*".

In this first dramatic setting we entertain the whole fantasy of being cross-examined by God; we see ourselves selected above all of creation to speak and to justify who we are; the created standing before the creator.

It's quite amazing that the immensity of this courtroom drama has such a simple ending, and a very Micah ending; for although he is passionate in reproaching unjust leaders, defending the rights of the poor against the rich and powerful; his simple word is one that all can follow: "*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*".

The Psalm is a different genre and is seemingly much more simple and lyrical; and perhaps it will appeal to those who appreciate a good musical. The lead singer, baritone, asks a deep and pertinent question; and the whole chorus then respond with the answer.

And then we have the contrast of Paul's letter, and his letters are more like a long running TV serial; we know all the characters and the overall plot direction, but each episode has a cryptic subtext that we sometimes get and that we sometimes miss until someone else points it out to us.

Next we have the docudrama of the gospel; and in today's episode we have the 'Sermon on the mount' and so as church-goers we can readily identify with that first audience sitting and listening.

But, can we hear and appreciate the radical understanding of this man who is neither an Anglican, nor an Australian and not even a Christian?

As we flick between these four different channels is there any one show that gets our attention more than the others, do they maybe all have an uninteresting sameness such that we continue flicking through looking for something else?

A quote that might be helpful to shed light on this process of seeking that which interest us:

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

[José Ortega y Gasset was a Spanish liberal philosopher]

We can discover ourselves in the ancient sacred texts, and we can equally cast a wider net (even an internet) to look for those influences that give meaning, purpose and direction to our lives.

Seeking God is also seeking our own Divine 'being'; and so becoming aware of how our life has been shaped enables us also to discern how we might also be giving shape to the future of life.

When we place ourselves in Micah's courtroom we too will be asking of ourselves:

"With what shall I come before the LORD?"

Chances are none of us have

"calves a year old..... thousands of rams",

and not even

"ten thousands of rivers of oil".

And yet most of us have more than 90% of the people on Earth; so it is an amazing question for us to ask of ourselves;

"With what shall I come before the LORD?"

And as we stand before the mountains and hills of creation what do we hear and what does it mean to us when the words are spoken;

"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".

We find ourselves changing channels again, and we most probably will settle in to the "Sermon on the Mount" and follow the 2000year old tradition of listening followed by a roast lunch; and the words of the 'beatitudes' sound somehow very comforting. We now hear Jesus who speaks of the new era he has come to initiate; and he uses a litany that many of us have heard many times, known as the Beatitudes, from the Latin for *blessed*.

And as we've discovered in contemporary translations to be "blessed" is to be happy.

Without exploring the text any further we again have an opportunity to attend and to ask ourselves, or even just wonder about "Blessed", "Blessing" and "Happy" and our understanding of these words in our lives.

In Australia it is relatively easy to be happy, and many rejoiced in that very truth during Australia day.

But is it a truth?

We seek to know your truth in our heart, O Lord

Does the Sermon on the Mount, initiate the Australian way of life, or was perhaps this ancient teacher speaking of something more?

There is much to be found in any and all of the readings today, and even more when we pause to consider the variety of voices that have given shape to us and to where we are today..

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

[José Ortega y Gasset was a Spanish liberal philosopher]

When I was checking the reference for this quote I came across another from the same source:

Life is a series of collisions with the future; it is not the sum of what we have been, but what we yearn to be

Today's readings might help and enable us to discover our yearning.

Peter Humphris