

Trinity 14; Proper 19

11/09/20

*Lord, Take my words and make them yours,
so that each of us would hear from you. Amen.*

.....

Now I've got a confession to make..

I've been building barns

Yes, I know...I've got quite a large kitchen,
with a number of cupboards but since those
early days of Lockdown when I walked into
Sainsburys and discovered those empty
shelves, when for three consecutive weeks
the particular porridge which Peter & I like
was unavailable, when I was unable to buy
the sort of rice we eat

I've been building barns

Well perhaps not the sort of barns Jesus is speaking of in today's Gospel but my collection of large bags in which I store my overflow supply of porridge oats, brown rice and tissues is I suspect the modern day equivalent

And oh, I haven't yet told you about the extra-large packet of toilet rolls which I keep in my airing cupboard...just in case...you understand

Yes, guilty my lord of barn building

.....

But I'd like to suggest that this passage isn't really about barns or the modern-day equivalent... the size of our kitchen cupboards...or as in my case, the number of bags of supplies in our spare bedroom

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As I read this passage the line that leapt out at me was a little later in passage

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.....

This happened to a relative of mine some years ago

He went to bed one evening...and ‘his life was demanded of him’ at 2 o’clock in the morning

.....

And surely the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic has made us all aware of the fragility of life

As someone once said, there are two things we have no control over in this life...when we come into it...and when we leave it

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So what can we do?

What should we do?

I'd like to suggest that this passage provides both a challenge and an answer.

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First the challenge...

The rich Man in this parable 'thought to himself'...

What should I do

For I have no place...

I will do this...

I will pull down...

I will build...

I will store...

I will say to my soul...

.....

The rich Man in this parable 'thought to himself'...

About

My crops

My barns

My grain

My goods

My soul

.....

The word I or me occurs 11 times in one and a half sentences

His world was totally centred on himself

His priorities, his preoccupations, his plans, were all about himself

.....

And God said to him - You fool!

This passage throws up some hard questions

What are our priorities?

What are our preoccupations?

What are our worries?

.....

Now don't get me wrong, many of these preoccupations and worries are quite legitimate,

Worries about our health

Worries about our families

Worries about our jobs, or the jobs of members of our families or friends

Worries about the 'what ifs in life'

And you might say, especially in the current situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, how can I not worry

The answer, I believe is to be found in four words in the final verse of this passage

‘strive for his kingdom’

Jesus tells his disciples instead of worrying
‘strive for your Father’s kingdom’

What might that mean?

At first sight it sounds a bit vague, a bit nebulous

Well as some of you know I like looking at different translations of bible...it can be really helpful in understanding what is meant and two alternative translations for

‘strive for your Father’s kingdom’

read

‘seek His kingdom’...seek the Father’s kingdom

And

‘make the kingdom of God your primary concern’

Seek His kingdom

Seek to be part of His kingdom

Or we might say

Seek to part of His divine dance;

His divine dance of love...receiving His love
and then passing it on to others

.....

And the way we do this can I think be
illustrated by a famous painting

The Light of the World by Holman Hunt

A few words of explanation and then I will
shut up and let this 'sermon in a frame'
speak for itself

There are three versions of this painting and
the last one which Holman Hunt produced
near the end of his life is in St Pauls
Cathedral

It is surrounded by the most glorious ornate
frame and at the bottom of that frame are

the words from chapter 3 of the Book of Revelation

'Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with me.'

Jesus, the light of the world, the light which will give us all a proper perspective on our worries and preoccupations is the figure holding the lantern in left hand

His right hand is raised knocking on a door

The door represents us, our souls, our deepest being

If you look carefully you will see that the door has no handle on the outside...it can only be opened from the inside

Jesus can't open the door

Only the person on the other side of the door can open it

The door is surrounded by weeds and brambles which represents our worries, our

concerns, those things with which we are so preoccupied that we forget to open the door

Lets now sit for a little while and let God speak to us through this painting

Amen