

St Mark's Church

Living Thinking Faith

3 April 2012

19:30

'Touching our Humility'

*A reflective Service focusing on
the events of Jesus' last Tuesday*

Full Text Copy

Kyrie Eleison, Dan Gibson's Solitudes.

Welcome & Introduction

- Lent traditionally a time for repentance, confession, prayer, penance, almsgiving, and self-denial, even sack cloth and ashes.
- How to do that healthily – holding the tension of feeling the pain of our limitations and our mistakes in the one hand with the gift and rich learning this gives us with the other.
- Offer space to explore this using some of the events and narratives from Mark's Holy Tuesday narrative.

The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.**

Mark 11 v 12 - 26

On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard it. Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his

disciples went out of the city. In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

'The Season has Passed'

The interrelation of the clearing of the temple, and the cursing and withering of the fig tree, is established at several points. Above all, the fig tree is often in the Old Testament a symbol for Israel, and more than once Israel is judged under this symbol, "There will be no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither," said Jeremiah. In connection with this is the intriguing statement that "it was not the season for figs". This statement surely has less to do with horticulture than theology. The word for "season" (kairos) is used at the opening of the Gospel, "The time (kairos) has come," said Jesus, 'the kingdom of God is near'. Kairos means a special, critical moment. There is no fruit on the tree because its time has passed. The leafy fig tree, with all its promise of fruit, is as deceptive as the temple, which, with all its bustling activity, is really an outlaw's hideout.

(James R. Edwards, Markan Sandwiches: The Significance of Interpolations in Markan Narratives, Novum Testamentum XXXI, 3 (1989) 193-216)

Examen

What thoughts, words, and deeds have become barren and withered in your life?
What are you hanging on to when its season has passed?
What do you need to let go of?

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

The Greatest Commandment

**We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.**

Mark 12 vv 28 -34

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbour as oneself,'--this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

'Humility'

The root [of the word] is the Latin word humus which means 'soil' or 'earth'. From this there follows a very practical definition: to be humble is to be down to earth. This leads into being realistic, honest and truthful. The root also connects humility to humanity, because to be human is to be made from humus. Homo sapiens is the piece of earth that knows it is alive.

If you examine human interactions that go wrong, whether in bitter arguments or wars, there is usually somewhere a lack of humility and an excess of arrogance. Humility is about our struggle to be fully human, the desire to be rooted in the real earthly self and not to be deceived by the lie of the divine self.
(Abbot Christopher Jamison, Finding Sanctuary)

Examen

Where have you not loved, God, your neighbour or yourself with your whole heart?

What do you know about bitter arguments and wars?

Where are you lured by the illusion of the divine self?

Christ have mercy

Christ have mercy

The Widow's Offering

**In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

Mark 12 vv 38 - 44

As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the

greater condemnation." He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

'Shame'

Healthy shame keeps us grounded. It is a yellow light warning us that we are essentially limited. Healthy shame is the basic metaphysical boundary for human beings. By knowing our limits we can use our energy more effectively and have a clearer direction. Healthy shame gives us permission to be human.

Furthermore, our healthy shame is essential as the ground of our spirituality. By signalling us of our essential limitations, our healthy shame lets us know that we are not God. It points us in the direction of some larger meaning. It lets us know that there is something greater than ourselves. Our healthy shame is the psychological ground of our humility.

(John Bradshaw, Healing the Shame that Binds You)

Examen

Where have you donned the long robes of arrogance, pretension and self importance?

Where do you need to acknowledge your limitations and forgive yourself for what you have been?

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Time of Reflection and Action

including Frail, Jars of Clay

- Two coins, pain and gift humility and shame.
- Where does it hurt and what fruit does that hurting bring you?
- Where do you need to seek forgiveness and where to you need to offer it?
- How can you ground yourself in the humility of your humanity?
- Feel how the coins rub up against each other in your hands.
- Hold yourself gently, these things are not easy, simply hold these thoughts and feelings in you mind and in your hands.
- When the music ends – offer to God, as a sign of accepting our limitations, acknowledging that we are not God and that we rest in a larger meaning.

Confession

**Most merciful God,
Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
we confess that we have sinned
in thought, word and deed.
We have not loved you with our whole heart.
We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us to amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
that we may do justly,
love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.**

Absolution

**Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon us,**

**pardon and deliver us from all our sins,
confirm and strengthen us in all our goodness,
and keep us in life eternal,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Sign No More, Mumford and Sons

Feel free to abide in the worship space for as long as you wish.