

Sunday 31st July 2022
Seventh Sunday after Trinity

Liverpool Parish Church

OT: Revelation Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23

NT: Colossians 3:1-11

G: Luke 12:13-21

Many years ago, I was leaving my job which was largely office based, to take on a job working a lot from home. This is years before Covid, when working from home became 'the thing'. Part of this involved clearing out a back bedroom to be used as my 'home office'. This process involved lots of shredding, lots of bin bags, lots of trips to the tip and a lot of just getting rid of several unwanted possessions. It took a long time and I kept stopping to say 'aah' for example when I came across the invitations I'd sent out for mine and my husband's wedding, when I came across my daughter's old school reports etc. The whole process was cathartic and removing all the unwanted possessions felt somewhat freeing. It helped me to make a fresh start for the new job and I had a suitable office environment at home. I've since moved on from that job, but the home office has come in very handy for studying and during the pandemic, an increased need to work from home. Getting rid of possessions and putting things into order can help us to look forward to a different future, to be set free to move in a different direction.

In the Gospel we've heard today, Jesus provides us with an example of someone holding on to earthly things, someone who has forgotten the things of God. Jesus tells the story of the rich fool in answer to someone who comes to him about a contested will, someone who has not profited from their father's death and is upset by this. Jesus warns him and us today about greed. Jesus goes on to talk about a rich man who has a massive harvest and then decides to build bigger barns to store the gains and then decides that his future is secure and he can sit back and relax. This seems to be a good idea, but there is a twist to this

story, the man dies before he can enjoy all that he has stored up. God refers to him as a fool, he has been so busy gaining that he has forgotten to build up his treasure in heaven- he hasn't allowed space for God in his life. The man firmly believes that all that he has is his own. Last weekend, in my neighbourhood, there was a burst water main. I came downstairs and turned on the tap and there was no water- seriously. The water came back on the next day, but it was a stark reminder to me that we take for granted the simplest of things, we are so blessed to have running water and everything we have is from God. God gives everything to us to steward in a Christ-like way. For Jesus, this man is a fool- since where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.

We are now in Ordinary Time in the church calendar, and this will stretch to Advent. This is a good time of year to take stock of our Christian lives. In Colossians, St Paul talks about sorting out our Christian lives, letting go of the past and moving into a Christ-shaped future. Moving from the old, cluttered, messy back bedroom to the 'on trend' home office. In the weeks ahead, how can we de-clutter and make more space for God? Seriously, go home and have a good clear out. Take all those things that 'might come in handy' to a charity shop, declutter. Let someone else benefit from your unwanted things. Moving forward, think about what you bring into your home, think about how you shop and what you buy, be responsible with your belongings and spending power.

After decluttering, focus on the internal, which attitudes, behaviours and prejudices need to be changed or dropped? Jesus is in everyone we meet. Do we see others as God sees them? The church here is part of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion. Whilst we here at Our Lady and St Nicholas are a totally inclusive and affirming church, there are those within the wider Anglican Communion that are not. During the Lambeth Conference

this week, a statement was issued that the orthodox Bishops would not receive communion alongside gay partnered bishops and those who endorse same sex unions. A friend of mine on social media posted this in response and I reproduce here with permission (Nadine Daniel)

*“These are Church leaders who for the sake of a political stunt and a bit of theatre, would deny themselves the very essence of what it is to be a follower of Christ, namely sharing the Sacraments of bread and wine in communion with their fellow Christians. As Bishop Paul Bayes reminded us in his astonishing sermon upon becoming Bishop of Liverpool (and later in his book *The Table*) the Table of our Lord Jesus Christ is big enough to welcome everyone.*

But these Bishops and Archbishops would seek to exclude, to deny, to excommunicate not individuals, which is bad enough, but whole Provinces of the Anglican Communion. Why? Because they cannot accept that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image, that two people who want to commit their lives to one another in the sight of God in the Sacrament of marriage is not a sin, that obeying Christ's commandment to "Love one another as I have loved you" means everyone, not just people like you. There's is a mean faith, an angry faith, an exclusive faith. It is not my faith. And we wonder why the Church is viewed as increasingly irrelevant and the pews are empty? Jesus Wept (John 11:35)”

When thinking about decluttering, not storing up riches on earth, let us strip ourselves of any attitudes that are not Christ – like and see others as Jesus sees them. In Liverpool this weekend it has been a celebration of Pride for the LGBTQI+ community and for all of us who are allies. I normally march along at Pride, but this year I had the privilege of conducting a wedding here at Liverpool Parish Church. When will I have the privilege of conducting a same sex marriage? It feels like a long way off. I strive to be Christ like and love everyone as Christ does, can we all try to do the same?

To conclude, I quote our very own Revd Canon Dr Crispin Pailing who spoke at Pride yesterday, *"Whilst the Church of England and many other churches remain institutionally homophobic, not all Christians are homophobic or transphobic. The worldwide Christian community includes millions who bless and honour same sex relationships. If you identify as LGBTQ+, do not look to the church for affirmation of who you are. You are recognized and loved by God and you do not need approval from others. It is the church which needs affirmation in its ability to love you."*

Let us strive to be Christ-like and declutter ourselves of any thoughts or practices that are not of the Kingdom of God.

Revd Jennifer Brady