

**Sunday 15 June 2025**  
**Trinity Sunday**

**Liverpool Parish Church**

**OT: Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31**

**NT: Romans 5:1-5**

**Gp: John 16:12-15**

'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now', says Jesus in today's gospel. Jesus here is teaching his disciples the importance of his departure and warning them that they will not understand who he is and what he is about until after the Resurrection when he departs from them. The disciples still have hold of him, but he tells them that it will be necessary for him to go to the Father. There will be no truthful way of speaking about him except as the one who is from the source of all things. These simple words contain all the mysteries we celebrate when we say the creeds and celebrate the Eucharist. Jesus gives what the Father gives: 'He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you'.

At the beginning of John's gospel, we read of the Word being 'nearest to the Father's heart' from all eternity, mirroring perhaps how wisdom is remembered in the book of Proverbs in our first reading: before creation, Wisdom was there with the source of all things. This Wisdom, this Word, this Logos, comes to us in the flesh and blood of Jesus and in John's terminology, he shows the glory of God pouring out in love. The fullest manifestation of that love is in his acceptance of death, and if we face his death we are set free so that the divine life is shared with us; and so Paul put it in his letter to the Romans today: 'through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God', whilst the gospel tells us that the Father sends the Spirit of Truth which allows us to share in that glory. There, our readings have provided a capsule summary of the mystery we are celebrating today: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is not simply a complicated doctrine, but a joyful, relational and personal celebration of God's reality.

Instead of beginning with an apology for the alleged complexity of the doctrine as some preachers might, we say that in order to come to appreciate and wonder, we need to realise that we cannot have Jesus on our own terms; Jesus tells his disciples, you cannot bear everything about what he is and has to say. The Resurrection of Christ showed that his life is like God the Father's life: it is indestructible. We cannot relate to Jesus simply in human terms; neither is he some nice bloke who has sadly died but whose grave we can visit. He is alive and is ahead of us, clearing the way to the Father's heart. The Christian faith does not look back to a great teacher and example as some other religious traditions might teach; it looks forward to where Jesus has led the way, to that ultimate home with God. As such, Jesus tells us that God has taken what is his and declared it to us. He is not simply giving them teachings about doctrine; rather, what we have is God acting to draw us to himself and

it's that acting in the world that gives us a clue to understanding just a small part of the immeasurable mystery that we celebrate on Trinity Sunday.

Just as he acts to draw us to himself, we are to act and bring others along the journey. But we are not to do so to show how utterly sure we are of our own rightness. We can be easily tempted to control how we understand Jesus and, therefore, God. We want him to be here, not there. We want to manage him so that we can be told that everything is alright on our own side. We do this when we are caught in religious conflict, and we do it when we engage in moral debates, and we certainly do it in politics. We want to be reassured, rather than move faithfully with Jesus along a path of new life whose movements and turnings we can never know in advance.

The celebration of God as Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forces us to ask where and how we might want to turn away from making Jesus in our own image when we are supposed to accept that we no longer can do that. He is ahead of us all the time. He is difficult to control. If we have an absolute reassurance of our own moral rightness in everything we do, then we will be standing in the way of following Jesus and growing in the Truth of the Holy Spirit that our Gospel speaks about today. We might be pleased with an image of ourselves, but that image prevents us from a deeper and harder call of the Gospel.

For months now, we have witnessed disturbing moral arguments raging backwards and forwards in this country and abroad over the rightness or wrongness of the various conflicts we are witnessing in the Middle East. You will have noticed how some opponents of the war insist that the motives of those in power in the state of Israel must come from their being personally corrupt, dishonest and bloodthirsty – as if the question could simply be settled by deciding on the wicked nature of certain individuals.

Equally though, the defenders of the war have accused its critics of being unable to tell good from evil, of colluding with the savage cruelty whether of Hamas or the Iranian regime. There is clear and evident superficiality in some of our public arguments. But what we forget in all of this, is the odd and not terribly pleasant tendency in our hearts to deny that we all have a mixture of motives when we react to crises, to deny the uncertainties of our own understanding that lie behind so much of our own decisions, to deny hidden prejudice.

I have followed some respectable commentators cheering the current attacks on Iran as a great victory; they seem to think that all the problems will disappear very soon. Or there are those saying, this is a catastrophe, we are on the edge of a political collapse in the Middle East and the demise of international law. Both arguments are trying to show that they are on the right side, they want a grip on the kind of perspective that they are comfortable with. They don't like to be patient for a fuller discernment to be born.

On the other hand, Jesus warns us today: the truth is that we don't see yet clearly. Even if we did, that is not going to settle the moral rights and wrongs of the origins of the current conflict. All sides are afraid to acknowledge that they have something in common in what they resist. To acknowledge that, should not lead necessarily to thinking that every decision is flawed. It should allow us to have an adult admission to say that even when we pursue good, our humanity remains flawed and can create new difficulties.

When Jesus tells us that we can't bear what he has to say, he is also telling us not to use him in a way that keeps us blind to the real and potential evil within us. What we need to do instead is to open ourselves to the infinite possibilities of growth that we have in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that can deal with the evil that is in us. It's that evil that makes Good Friday happen. The disciples did not wake up on Easter Sunday to think that it was all a bad dream. It all really happened. Indeed, we live in a Good Friday world. In the light of the Resurrection, however, we need to decide how to relate to the reality that will never go away, the fear and the denials of truth.

We need to learn that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, provides a transformation that is not yet imagined or expected, as we call God Father, just as Jesus did. On that journey, we must travel light, not get over anxious about defending ourselves all the time, forgetting to enjoy living on the soil we are so eager to defend; for, as Paul reminds us today: 'since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. He does not assure us that we are innocent, but that we are forgiven. He is raised for our justification. As we struggle with the dilemmas of our own times, let us do our best to challenge ourselves, and bring our own convictions to the Truth. Let us turn away from the tempting image of our own righteousness, turning our gaze to Jesus at this altar, who brings us to the Father's heart in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Fr Yazid Said**