

Trinity 11 2020

23 rd August Trinity 11	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983	A&M 101 O Worship the King Psalm 138 154 Gracious Spirit 131 Love Divine 219 Soldiers of Christ
23 rd August Trinity 11	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 51 vv 1-6 p738 Romans 12 vv 1-8 p1139 Matthew 16 vv 13-20 p983	SoF 530 The God of Abraham 488 Rock of Ages 541 Therefore the Redeemed 362 Shine Jesus Shine 599 Trust & Obey 381 Make Me a Channel

O GOD, who declarest thy almighty power most chiefly in shewing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

You know it makes sense is one of Del Boy Trotter's favourite expressions in *Only Fools and Horses*. The thing is, of course, that Del Boy's schemes more often than not turn out not to make sense. They lose money or they get him into trouble with the law or with the criminal fraternity or with both.

But what about faith? Does faith make sense. S Paul says in our NT lesson: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* It makes sense to present our bodies to be a living sacrifice. The church bibles render this phrase *spiritual service*. So I looked it up in the dictionary. S Paul's λογικην can be translated either as *reasonable* or *spiritual*, which I found very interesting. A truly spiritual sacrifice is a reasonable sacrifice. It is not offering some dumb animal on an altar, with no reason or commitment on the part of the worshipper. A truly spiritual is the offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies, in a spirit of pure, unadulterated love. The only other place in the NT where this word λογικος occurs is in S Peter's first letter, chapter 2 verse 2: *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* Otherwise translated, *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk.* Spiritual milk, milk of the Word. The Word is Jesus. The Word is the substance of the Church's preaching. The Word is the Bible. The Word is engrafted in the hearts of Christian people. By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made. Jesus, the Word of God, utterly gave Himself to us. Our only reasonable response is to offer ourselves back to Him. Everything we have comes from God. Everything that we are is the gift of God. We are the gift of God. It follows that it surely makes sense *to present our bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*

A long time ago, I heard a preacher say that many other preachers tell their congregations that there is no pleasure in sin. His response to this was that, if that was the experience of those preachers' congregations, they hadn't been trying the right sins. There is pleasure in sin. Otherwise, people wouldn't sin. There can also be fear in not sinning. Suppose, I give generously to charity, what happens if I run out of money? If I give up this job which makes me uncomfortable because I feel that what I have to do is unethical, how will I earn a living? If I don't join in gossiping with the gossips, will they still want to be my friends or will they start gossiping about me? The devil doesn't have too hard a job tempting us to sin. But, that somewhat cynical preacher wasn't entirely right either. Superficially, sin may appear to be the most rational course: look after number one, because nobody else will; do what pleases you and don't worry about the consequences; hang on to what you've got; don't stand out in the crowd. But this is all superficial. Living a selfish life, caring for neither God nor man, won't make you happy either in this life or the next. S Paul again, writing to Jews and pagans who have come to know Jesus: *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.* It makes sense *to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*

And why does it make sense? In the OT lesson, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, God tells the people to remember where they have come from. God called Abraham and Sarah and made wonderful promises to them. These promises were fulfilled in the lifetimes of the patriarchs. They were fulfilled in Israel's history. They are being fulfilled today and will be finally fulfilled in Jesus when He comes again to judge the living and the dead. We know that it makes sense to trust God because of the record of what He has done and because of our own experience of God working in our own lives. We know that we can trust Him and it therefore makes sense to *present [y]our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*

Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished. God made heaven and earth and all who dwell in them. Surely, that's reason enough to trust God, but, God says, there is so much more to it even than that. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, says Jesus, but my words shall not pass away. My salvation, says God, shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished.* We most certainly can entrust ourselves to Him. *I know whom I have believed.*

And if all this were not enough, what about the Gospel reading? What about what God has disclosed to Peter in today's Gospel? This man, Jesus of Nazareth, is none other than *the Christ, the Son of the living God.* What more proof could God give us that He loves us? What more reason could He give us that we should have faith in Him, that we should entrust ourselves to Him? In Whom could there possibly be a more sure and certain hope than in Jesus, *the Christ, the Son of the living God?*

Not only does it make sense to offer ourselves utterly to God as Jesus gives Himself utterly to us, it makes no sense at all to attempt to live in any other way. Jesus is the Way, the Truth & the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Him.

I think this post-Communion prayer from the old prayerbook sums it up nicely.

O LORD and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching thee to grant, that by the merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in his blood, we and all thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that all we, who are partakers of this holy Communion, may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. *Amen*