

Trinity 10 2020

16 th August Trinity 10	9.30 Holy Communion	Isaiah 56 v 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-32 p1137 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982	A&M 172 Glorious Things of Thee 179 God of Mercy 137 There is a Green Hill 132 Son of God, Eternal 139 Rejoice the Lord is King
16th August Trinity 10	11.00 Holy Communion	Isaiah 56 v 1-8 p742 Romans 11 vv 1-32 p1137 Matthew 15 vv 21-28 p982	MP 5 All Hail the Power 248 To God be the Glory Psalm 67 21 Bind Us Together 217 The Church's One Foundation 50 For I'm Building a

LET thy merciful ears, O Lord, be open to the prayers of thy humble servants; and that they may obtain their petitions make them to ask such things as shall please thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

My father used to tell a story about a cheeky young working class girl who said something less than respectful to the elderly gentleman who, as his ancestors had done, lived in the big house and owned much of the land around the village. He told her off. "Time was," he said, "when people in this village tugged their forelocks to me and called me 'sir'!" "Well," she replied, "them days is gone, mate." I guess this exchange took place in the 1950s when the need to pull together in two world wars had done so much to undermine the class system.

Before the first world war, in another village, I could tell you about a young woman from a working class family who was sometimes invited to socialise with the daughters of the Hall because they were lonely and she had been brought up to have nicer manners than most of the village children, her own mother having been in service, theirs working on the land, but who was not expected to be present when the Hall entertained people of their own class.

Them days is gone, mate. Well, are they? Don't we still tend to mix with people like us? The figures show that inequality between rich and poor has actually grown over the last few decades. It may not be acceptable to be so obvious about class differences nowadays as it was 100 years ago, but they are still there. Some blocks of flats built very recently in London to accommodate both rich owner occupiers and much poorer council tenants have separate entrances for the rich and for the poor.

There are of course other divisions in society. Race is an obvious issue. It is true that black people are less likely to get good jobs and more likely to fall foul of the justice system than white people. That isn't because God made white people better than black people. It is because the people who wield power consciously or unconsciously assume that black people are less able to perform well in important roles and are more likely to break the law. This can of course be a vicious circle. If there is a prejudice against a group of people such that they are not expected to be able to take advantage of opportunities in life, they may not be granted the opportunities that are made available to others who are perhaps believed to be more promising candidates. It then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that the already disadvantaged are incapable of bettering themselves. Try giving them the chance. It is also true that we don't mix with, we don't welcome into our company (in either sense) people

who are not like us. We are comfortable within our own social circle, with people like ourselves.

And that's not necessarily a bad thing. It is good to belong to a family who will always be there for you. It is terrific to be part of a community, a neighbourhood, of people whom you know you can trust, people who share your values, people who will support you and your family and whom you, in turn, will support when they need you. It is a tremendous blessing to be a member of a Church, a Christian community of people who share your faith, hope and love.

If you are a parent, you probably encouraged your children to make friends with other families whom you felt you could trust. You discouraged your boys from joining gangs of kids who broke the law. You hoped your daughters would make friends with nice girls. To a degree, the way you spoke, the way you dressed, the leisure events you chose quite naturally reflected the sort of family you saw yourselves as and the sort of community you wanted to belong to. Young adults who have been brought up without knowing much about the Church who then come to faith and go to join a church are often caught out by the fact that, by and large, Christians aren't expected to swear, whereas almost everybody else does in modern Britain. So, a young man from a non-Christian background joins a church and takes the vicar to the pub after the service. As the conversation progresses, without even thinking about it, the young man frequently uses the Names of God and Jesus and Christ as swear words. Does the vicar tell him off, make him feel uncomfortable or just let it go? And what would you do?

The two sides of belonging. It's marvellous to belong to a good family, a supportive community, the Christian Church. *I'm glad I belong to Jesus.* But what about those who don't feel that they belong? What about the people whom we might feel we don't want to belong with us? It used to be a dilemma when a church decided to set up a youth club. Do you run an open club, invite all the teenagers in the village and run the risk that some of them might smash up the building or deal drugs? Or do you run a club for church members only, kids whose families you trust to share Christian values and support you in what you are trying to do? If you run an open club to which Christian families are unwilling to entrust their teenagers, what are you doing for the nurture of your church youngsters? If you run a club for church members only, what are you doing for young people in the world which God so loved that He gave His only Son for their salvation? Or do you run two clubs – one for us and people like us, or at least potentially willing to become like us, and one for the outsiders?

I mention all this because all today's lessons from the Bible are about how God includes the outsider, including people whom some of those already on the inside think ought to remain on the outside. God's invitation is to the whole of humanity. All are welcome. All are acceptable, because it is not of us but of God that God welcomes us into His family. We belong because God just loves us as we are, not because we are especially lovable people. As members of God's family, it is clear from the readings, we are expected to be transformed so that we adopt the manners and customs, the marks, of the people of God, that we live worthily of our heavenly Father, a credit to our divine Brother, which means that we are called to be as welcoming and as open as God Himself is to us.