

***BELOVED, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ... for God is love.***

The message is so simple – God is love , Love one another – that we risk not hearing it. On the one hand, it is a great understanding, it changes everything. In the words of the Canadian divine Robert Crouse, so succinct and clear and beautiful:

‘To know God ... as the infinite power ruling the cosmos, is a noble knowledge, certainly. But to know God as love is something much more, and far different. To know that the eternal principle moving and governing all things is the divine love is a transforming knowledge. To know that God is love is to see everything with new eyes. It is to see "a new heaven and new earth." (Revelation 21.1) It is to be spiritually "reborn," as Jesus said to Nicodemus in last Sunday's Gospel lesson. (John3.7) It is to be saved from fear and hopelessness’.<sup>1</sup>

‘...to be saved from fear and hopelessness’ What a promise, what a gift. There has been a lot of fear around hasn't there? Many temptations for hopelessness.

People have been afraid of loved ones getting sick and dying, perhaps of our own earthly demise, of financial and social uncertainties. And then, in these last few weeks, questions about racism and justice have provoked different kinds of fears as well as anger, more temptation to hopelessness.

So, how is this great transformation available to us? If we attend to the plan of readings these next weeks, this transformation in love is not only presented to us, it pursues us.

Last Sunday, we arrived at the conclusion of the first half of the Xn year. A door was opened in heaven. We know this door -- our Lord Jesus tells us -- I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

To find this door, is to find that transforming love already. But what do we see when it is opened, how do we walk through? Last week the emphasis was on the revelation of God as love. In the words of Dr Pusey:

... the Father, Who is Infinite Love, ever loveth the Son and is beloved by Him; and the One Love of the Father and the Son ever breathest forth the Holy Ghost, Who is Love, and returning to Them, completes the life of God.’<sup>2</sup> God is ‘a boundless Ocean of love....one Eternal flow of Infinite Unchanging Bliss’.<sup>3</sup>

This is a transforming knowledge. Pusey continues:

Without the knowledge of the Being of the Holy Trinity ... we had not known what Divine Love is. [But with this knowledge] ... Now we know how God can love, how that Holy Boundless Being, Who fills all space, Who created and upholds all things, Who made us too in His Image, in Whom and through Whom

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Crouse <http://www.lectionarycentral.com/trinity01/Crouse1.html>

<sup>2</sup> Pusey, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, ‘The Holy Trinity’, 480.

<sup>3</sup> ‘God is Uncreated, Unlimited, Unlimitable Love, Essential Love, in Himself. Love is the Divine Essence. The life of God is Love. His Eternal Being is Infinite Love, having its full contentment in Itself, because the Father, Who is Infinite Love, ever loveth the Son and is beloved by Him; and the One Love of the Father and the Son ever breathest forth the Holy Ghost, Who is Love, and returning to Them, completes the life of God.’ ‘The Mystery of the Trinity’, 500.

all things are, Who is Himself above all, and through all, and in all, exists only in Love, that He loves Infinitely, with His Whole Infinite Being, what is Infinitely to be loved'.<sup>4</sup>

This is 'to see everything with new eyes', to be born again, to 'see "a new heaven and new earth."' But it can sound abstract, removed from the day to day struggles, and today, this love pursues us in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This also makes one of the principle emphases of the second half of the Christian year clear to us. This love is not just far off, God seeks to give us His love in us, to make his love the core of who we are. During Lent, we confessed that we know little of this love, and we looked to our Blessed Lord to show us, to show that love to the end. In Trinity season, we continue to look to Him to show us what love means, to come to dwell in us, to burn away our unlove, and to live in us, but we learn more especially to recognize that love in how we love one another.

'If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' This love pursues us, and if we are attentive, we will recognize both the greatness of the gift and our new love to be poured into us. During Lent we heard the great Bishop of Zanzibar, Frank Weston, who went from Trinity College here in Oxford to London and then to East Africa at end of 19<sup>th</sup> c. In an ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE ANGLO-CATHOLIC CONGRESS July 12, 1923 he offered a powerful commentary on the Gospel for today:

'Brethren...' [Brothers and Sisters] 'You cannot claim to worship Jesus in the tabernacle if you do not pity Jesus in the slum. ... It is the gospel truth. If you are prepared to say that an Anglo-Catholic is at liberty to rake in all the money he can get, or that he may take his income no matter what the wages are that are paid or what the conditions under which people work; if you say that an Anglo-Catholic has a right to hold his peace while his fellow citizens are living in hovels below the level of the streets—then I say to you, you do not know the Lord Jesus [34/35] in His Sacrament! .... I am not talking economics, because I do not understand them: I am not talking politics, because I do not understand them: I am talking Gospel. And I say to you that if you are Christians, then your Lord is one and the same with Jesus on the throne of His Glory, with Jesus in His Blessed Sacrament, with Jesus received into your hearts in Communion, with Jesus Who is mystically with you as you pray, and with Jesus enshrined in the hearts and bodies of His brothers and sisters up and down this world. And it is folly, it is madness, to suppose that you can worship Jesus in the Sacrament and Jesus on the throne of glory when you are sweating Him in the bodies and the souls of His children. It is our present duty to serve Jesus in the souls and bodies of our fellow men.'

Weston takes us from a lofty view of the divine love on which we gazed through the door of heaven back through our communion in that one door, the LJC, to the body of Christ.

The parable does not give a lot of details, but gives enough: The rich man 'was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day'. The beggar named Lazarus 'was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table'. It appears that the Rich Man did not see Lazarus. Maybe he looked at him, but he did not recognize him. The Parable tells us first that we need to see Lazarus, not to erase him.

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<sup>4</sup> 'Mystery of the Trinity', 499

Pusey also made the point with incisive clarity. He spoke of London, ‘this wealthy city... with its frightful contrasts of extreme luxury and extreme misery’ of ‘thousands of everliving beings, who once were made brethren in Christ, yet in life are strangers and estranged, loathing and loathed by one another’:

‘Alas, [he said] in this wealthy city, Lazarus lies neglected many thousand times. God in His mercy grant that in the Day of account there be not found in this congregation one Dives. But that there be not, great as His mercy is, we must learn more needfully to seek Him here also, lest haply we miss Him.’<sup>5</sup>

He comments also on the strange kind of charity promoted by the economic practices of his day, practices and pressures we will recognize also:

‘We are to expend on ourselves, forsooth, in order to find employment for the poor. ... Doubtless [the rich man] encouraged the manufactures of Tyre and Sidon, and the weavers of Palestine, while he bound not up the sores of Lazarus; foreign commerce and domestic labour were promoted by the luxuries of his table and the rich ointment for his guests, while he fed not Lazarus with the crumbs which fell from it’.

Pusey continues:

‘...A reckless, [fraudulent]<sup>6</sup> competition, whose aim is to cheapen every luxury and vanity, in order that those at ease may spend on fresh accumulated luxuries and vanities what they withhold from the poor, lowers the price of the things which we crave for, by paring down the wages of the poor’.

In this particular sermon on the value of giving alms, of participating in the outpouring of God’s love in practical ways, Pusey challenges his hearers to live more simply and to give more generously. I don’t want to pretend that this is simple.

Of course, we often turn to luxuries and different forms of indulgence because we too are covered with sores, we bear in ourselves pain and troubles which we look to have soothed. Our Lord comes to heal, and to pour in oil and wine, to bind up that we may bind up.

In a practical way, we all know that simply giving money to people who ask can salve our consciences, but often at the risk of causing more misery. That’s not much of a help. What can we do? I’m going to leave that question hanging, though I would be very glad indeed to hear from you. Our Common Good project has been a PH attempt to address this question in practical way, but we’re all too conscious of how difficult it is to answer.

Today, I’m going to shift focus, with help again of Frank Weston, Bp of Zanzibar, who has words for us that connect directly with the trials and fears of these days. Instead of learning by the presence of Christ in the blessed sacrament to recognize the face of OBL in all his brothers and sisters, [Christianity] was failing in E Africa because, he wrote,

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<sup>5</sup> ‘...there is not one work of piety or charity, the building houses of God, relieving God's peculiar care, the fatherless and the widow, tending Christ in His sick members, guarding those frail but hallowed temples of the Holy Spirit, the baptized children of the poor, on which a hundred fold more energy, than now is, should not be employed, for which sacrifices a thousand fold should not be made’.

<sup>6</sup> Pusey says ‘fraudful’, 378-9, sermon on the ‘Value of Almsgiving’ *University sermons* vol. 2

‘we Europeans are too often more conscious of our race and colour than of relations to eternal love and His Eastern children’.<sup>7</sup>

‘Jesus of Bethlehem is the centre of a fellowship; while the Church, as a whole’ Weston thought ‘connives at divisions of classes and castes, of races and colours’. He also connected this to the hunger for wealth or luxury: ‘Jesus of Nazareth is naked; the Church, as a whole, acquiesces in, and largely uses, men’s lust of possession. Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament is slave to the human race’.<sup>8</sup> To bring this more directly to the concerns of these days, Bishop Weston speaks bluntly: ‘Colour prejudice is evil. Christ was a “coloured” man’.<sup>9</sup> He says very clearly, ‘Black Lives Matter’. The Christian is not surprised to find division racism, other forms of unlove in our hearts.

Well, now I need to take another risk, to pass on to another side of the challenge for us. This is risky, because I’m passing over very quickly the horrors of the death which has led to pain and anger and demonstrations, and passing over is dangerous, we need to see one another, each of us as Lazarus and the rich man.

I cannot claim, of course, perfect knowledge as to whether statues like the one of Cecil Rhodes should remain. I am not one who thinks it should be torn down. Whether one agrees with his conclusion, there is a message which expresses the light of Gospel in the words of Lord Patten, chancellor of this university, about the debate. He told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: ‘I stood along Nelson Mandela at a conference in Westminster Hall with Tony Blair and Bill Clinton in 2003 at which he said how strongly he supported the trust.... He set up... something called the Mandela-Rhodes Trust to help heal the divisions. For all the problems associated with Cecil Rhodes’ history, if it was alright for Mandela, then I have to say it’s pretty well alright with me.’<sup>10</sup> When Mr Mandela was asked about the partnership with the Rhodes Trust, he would simply refer to the preamble of the South African Constitution. The preamble enjoins us to ‘heal the divisions of the past, and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights, and to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person.’<sup>11</sup> Mandela, despite his experiences, did not seem to want to erase the past, but to see it redeemed.

This healing of the past is an expression of the divine love and mercy. It does not claim that one group is more valuable than another, or more free from sin than another, again, it not only enables Lazarus and rich man to see one another, but it recognizes that those two characters live in each of us.

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<sup>7</sup> Weston, *Revelation of Eternal Love*, p. 157, in Chapman, *Anglican Theological Review*, 85/2, p. 303.

<sup>8</sup> ‘The Church, rich in personal piety, does not make men, as a whole, see Jesus: in her moral and social life she does not manifest Him. Even were the whole of Christendom to become, to-morrow, one in faith and doctrine in union with the Apostolic See it would still fail to reveal Jesus in its corporate life. Jesus of Bethlehem is the centre of a fellowship; while the Church, as a whole, connives at divisions of classes and castes, of races and colours. Jesus of Nazareth is naked; the Church, as a whole, acquiesces in, and largely uses, men’s lust of possession. Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament is slave to the human race; the Church speaks the languages and thinks the thoughts of the prosperous, whose merit is to be “kind to the poor,” if so be the poor keep their place.’ Weston, *Defence of the English Catholic*, p. 13 in Mark Chapman, ‘Christ and the Gethsemane of Mind’, p. 305.

<sup>9</sup> The Pan-Anglican Conference, *The Church’s Mission in Christendom*, Vol 6, Section E, speeches and papers published for consideration of the conference (London, 1908), p. 134, quoted in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume V: Global Anglicanism, c. 1910-2000*, p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> 10 June, 2020 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/06/10/black-lives-matter-uk-london-protests-george-floyd-statues-racism/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mandelarhodes.org/about/story/>

There is another element in the protests of the last weeks which does not have a lot to do with the message that, in Weston's words, colour prejudice is evil. This other element is just as much an expression of unlove as the neglect of Lazarus or indulgence in colour prejudice.

This is the tear it all down element of the protests. Some of this emerges from political debate about principles which should order our society, but there is another element which we need to recognize, the element which deals with the problems of human sin, or racism, or hatred by destroying rather than healing. At the Monday night group, contemplated last week powerful arguments by Ivan Karamazov in *Brothers Karamazov* about why God would permit terrible human suffering. Ivan K focusses on terrible suffering of one girl, charges that her suffering is a refutation of divine justice. But there is a strange aspect of his argument:

'There is a sense in which Ivan's love of that little girl [in *The Brothers Karamazov*] is always in danger of becoming a kind of demonic compassion: a desire that she not exist at all, a conviction that it were better she had never been summoned into the wounded freedom of cosmic time or called into rational union with God than she suffer the wrongs done her at the hands of fallen creatures.'<sup>12</sup>

One commentator at least has evoked words of Edmund Burke and his reflections on the French Revolution in relation to some of the demonstrations of the past week: "Rage and frenzy will pull down more in half an hour, than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in a hundred years."<sup>13</sup>

This is not a political comment, the point here is more significant. There is part of us that would deal with problems of relationships, but getting rid of relationship – married couples face this, long-term friends, people working together, the temptation to turn our backs on one another, to destroy, to tear down, this is easier than recognizing the face of need in one another, face of Lazarus and the rich man.

Wheat and tares grow together. Sometimes, we can do some weeding, and we must. All that is unlove is to be rooted out. But it is possible to destroy the very field that we would want to weed, to destroy the wheat with the tares. Instead, let us not be afraid to recognize both the characters of the Gospel in ourselves today, to see in ourselves Lazarus in his need, and to see also the Rich Man, tempted to ignore or not see the need in the face of Lazarus, but grateful also for the embers of love in his heart also. Above all, ***BELOVED, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God ... for God is love.***

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<sup>12</sup> David Bentley Hart, *The Doors of the Sea: Where was God in the Tsunami* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids MI, 2005), p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Burke: "The fresh ruins of France ... which shock our feelings wherever we can turn our eyes, are not the devastation of civil war; they are the sad but instructive monuments of rash and ignorant counsel in time of profound peace."