

Sunday 19th September 2021 – Trinity 16

Mark 9.30-37

Welcome to Praying Together

Hymn Suggestions

[The Servant Song](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQaOErUUjm8)

[The Church of Christ in Every Age](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66Ob1pHj_Xg)

[The Father’s Song](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0nWPUpZKbk)

[O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30zir41aH4E&t=7s)

[Meekness and Majesty](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qXggFYQQTJ0)

There are also hymns here from St Martin’s in the Field: <https://www.achurchnearyou.com/hub/asset/hymns-and-choral-music>

Prayer of the Day:

Lord of creation,  
whose glory is around and within us:  
open our eyes to your wonders,  
that we may serve you with reverence  
and know your peace at our lives’ end,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection

Breathe slowly and deeply.

Ask God to speak to you through the passage that you are about to read.

Bible Reading: Mark 9.30-37

They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again.’ But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, ‘What were you arguing about on the way?’ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.’ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’

Some thoughts for further Reflection:

**Whose are you?**

I like this Bible story. One of the reasons I like it contains a couple of failures, a couple of mistakes: and I like that as I am a sucker for the underdog. The first failure happens before our verses today, but are worth recalling, as they help us get a picture of the disciples that may help us as we seek to follow Jesus.

**Failure one**

The first failure is by the disciples of Jesus. Just before the verses here, Jesus’ disciples, or his followers, have been brought a child by the child’s father. The child is suffering: it could not speak, could not hear, and was prone to fits. The father brings the child to the followers of Jesus and asks them if they can do anything for the child.

They have a go; and guess what happens?

Nothing. Nothing happens.

**Failure two**

The second failure is by the father of the child, but his shortcoming is not as serious. The father is upset that the followers of Jesus aren’t much like Jesus.

He won’t be the last person to be upset that the followers of Jesus are not much like Jesus. Hang around in church long enough – say about 2 minutes – and someone may well hurt you, disappoint you, let you down, show some moral shortcoming, etc.

The father, disappointed that the followers of Jesus aren’t much like Jesus himself, comes to Jesus and explains that the disciples have not been able to help his child, and he asks Jesus if he can do anything. ‘Jesus, can you help?’ Jesus tells him anything is possible for those who believe, and asks him if he believes.

‘I do believe!’ the man confidently proclaims. And then comes the slight failure as he goes on to add, ‘Help me overcome my unbelief.’ (This all happens before the Bible reading today – but it is relevant.)

*I believe. Help me overcome my belief.* Have you ever felt like that? I have, quite often. When we fail or fall short, a lot of the times it is a bit disappointing, but we get over it. Yet at other times a failure can be tragically sad.

**Jesus heals the boy**

Anyway, Jesus heals the boy – and all is good: except it isn’t.

In the reading we have heard, just after the boy has been healed, Jesus tells his disciples, those who have just failed, that Jesus himself will soon be arrested, tortured and killed. We sometimes imagine the disciples must have been full of faith, we hold them up and aspire to be like them – they had it all together and life was easy for them. But it wasn’t. They don’t understand what Jesus is saying to them, which is probably a good job, because if they did understand it they wouldn’t have liked what they heard. And then the disciples start arguing about who is the greatest amongst them.

On the back of failing to help the father of the child, they fail to understand what Jesus is saying and so fail to understand who Jesus is and what Jesus is doing and why. Then they have a big bust up about which of them is the best: *how insecure where they?!*

The disciples were a lot like you and I. They looked in the mirror (although mirrors were not invented then) and may have felt disappointed by what they saw. They got to be with Jesus, a hugely popular person who drew huge crowds, but they no doubt felt lonely. They got one-on-one teaching from Jesus, but they didn’t understand. They couldn’t always help people who needed help. They wanted to fix the world, but they couldn’t. They wanted their lives and other people’s lives to be better, but it was too difficult. They sometimes felt like life was going their way, and they sometimes had a deep sense of yearning that they could be doing better.

Maybe you know what that feels like. What is the one thing you would change about you or your circumstances if you were able to change one thing?

**Servant and child**

Jesus has an answer.

He tells the disciples - right at the point they are failing - to be like a servant or a child: if you want to win in this life serve everyone. Being a servant or a child is not particularly prestigious today – and it was less prestigious then…much less. So why would Jesus say this to help his failing disciples?

It is because at the heart of being a servant and a child is *knowing who you belong to.*

Every servant knew who their master was. Every child – in those days – got their status, their name, their importance, from their parents. They knew who their parents were. Whose they were gave them their identity.

Jesus *is not* saying that it is okay to have servants or slaves. He is not saying that a child has no status outside of their parents. But Jesus knows the question the disciples are asking, a question you may well have asked: Who am I? Why am I here?

And Jesus says the answer to those questions is found in the answer to the question: *whose am I?* Who do you belong to?

You have a heavenly Parent who loves you just as you are, not as you should be. A creator God who knows you are not an accident, not a fluke - but purposefully made. Whose are you? You are God’s, you have a brother named Jesus and God who calls you by name.

Spend some time reflecting on the truth that you are God’s child. That is where your identity is: it is not in what you do, where you succeed or how you have failed. Who you are is a child of God. What does that mean for the weeks and months ahead? How will you think differently, speak differently and act differently?

Harry Steele

OUR PRAYERS

O Lord God, who has called us to be your witnesses,

strengthen us to make your Word known to others,

through our own words and our lives,

through our prayers and our gifts.

Make your church an instrument of peace,

of love and of healing.

We ask you to heal the dissensions which divide us from each other,

and bring us back into a unity of love

which may bear some likeness

to the example you have sent us in your Son.

And, as you are above all things,

make us one through the bonds of affection

so that we may be spiritually united

through your peace, grace, mercy and tenderness.

May peace be within our walls and within ourselves:

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer**

O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace.  
Let the design of your great love

shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows,  
and give peace to your Church, peace among nations,  
peace in our homes and peace in our hearts.

May peace be within our walls and within ourselves:

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer**

Dear Father in heaven  
let us be peacemakers:  
more ready to call people friends than enemies  
more ready to trust than to mistrust  
more ready to love than to hate  
more ready to respect than to despise  
more ready to serve than be served  
more ready to absorb evil than pass it on.  
Dear Father in heaven  
let us be more like Christ.

May peace be within our walls and within ourselves:

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer**

Lord, we place in your gentle hands

those who are sick in body, mind or spirit.

Ease their pain, and heal the damage done to them.

Be present to them through the support of friends,

and in the care of doctors and nurses,

and fill them with the warmth of your love,

and your peace in their hearts.

May peace be within our walls and within ourselves:

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer**

We give you thanks for the victory of our Lord over death,

and for the gift of eternal life.

We pray for friends and loved ones,

who are with you in glory.

May peace be within our walls and within ourselves:

Lord, in your mercy

**hear our prayer**

A prayer concerning the Coronavirus

God of compassion,  
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.  
in their loneliness, be their consolation;  
in their anxiety, be their hope;  
in their darkness, be their light;  
through him who suffered alone on the cross,  
but reigns with you in glory,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

An act of spiritual Communion

My Jesus,   
I believe that You  
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.   
I love You above all things,   
and I desire to receive You into my soul.   
Since I cannot at this moment  
receive You sacramentally,   
come at least spiritually into my heart.

I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.

Never permit me to be separated from You. Amen.

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;**

**thy kingdom come; thy will be done;**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses,**

**as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation;** **but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,**

**the power and the glory,** **for ever and ever.** **Amen.**

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