

Reflection Bible Sunday: Matthew 24: 30-35

It feels a bit as if we are living in apocalyptic times, with the crisis in Israel/Palestine brought so close on our screens, and yet so alien to most of us; and with the dull drip of bad news here about the cost of living and fuel, the mendacity of politicians, the travails of the Church of England; the slog of war in Ukraine.

Jesus is talking about the 'end times' in this Gospel reading and encourages us to look for the signs and interpret them.

I'd like to flip this over, and suggest an effort of will (for that is how it is when we don't *feel* it) to watch out for signs of the Kingdom of God and signs of hope; and interpret those not in terms of apocalypse, but of Jesus coming close in love, kindness and compassion.

These signs are often on the small scale or at the level of the local – "The God of Small Things" (Arundhati Roy), as I have sometimes quoted the book title. One example: I'm not quite certain what is going to happen on Sunday with this festival of All Souls with an international flavour, but I do know the sincerity and concern of the organisers to help everybody come to terms with loss, and celebrate people whom they have loved and still love. During a period of violence and terrorism, this is a light in the darkness. It is an adventure, and a hopeful one.

Fr David



NEXT SUNDAY 05.11.2023 All Saints Sunday

10.30am Sung Eucharist in Church

READINGS: OT Revelation 7: 9-17

NT 1 John 3: 1-3

GOSPEL Matthew 5: 1-12



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St Thomas, Exeter 29th October 2023

Bible Sunday
10.30am in Church

Today

10.30am Sung Eucharist

Hymn Numbers

296 Let all the world in every corner sing
226 I cannot tell how he whom angels worship
514 Thou, whose almighty word
1-5pm All Souls Event. See notices.

Tuesday 31st October

7.30pm House Group. See notices.

Wednesday 1st November

10am All Souls Requiem Mass

Thursday 2nd November

9.30—11am St Thomas Tots

10.30am-12noon Knit & Natter, 19 Maple Rd
Details from Jenny on 01392 498725

Friday 3rd November

9.30am Morning Prayer

10am Staff Meeting



Collect

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Nehemiah 8: 1-4a, (5-6), 8-12

All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had given to Israel. Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. [And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.] So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.' So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, 'Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.' And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing,

because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

Colossians 3: 12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Matthew 24: 30-35

Jesus said then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see "the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven" with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. 'From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Post Communion

God of all grace, your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry with the bread of his life and the word of his kingdom: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

The responses to the Intercessions:

As the trumpet calls

Be our light along the path.

NOTICES

We are considering having a **warm space** again this year. If you would like to volunteer to help with this, please speak to Revd Sarah.

Community Larder There will be a collection box in church on Sundays for food donations. The need remains great so please be mindful of our wider community.

House Group is studying the Book of Proverbs. Meetings will be held at Perridge Close at 7.30pm. Please ring Helen on 410400 for details.

All Souls service is on Sunday 5th November at 4pm.

There will be an **inter-cultural celebration of All Souls** today starting at 1pm until 5pm. There will be an afternoon of food, music, talks and workshops. A cultural celebration of life and death centred around the theme of grief, loss and love. Come and join us, light a candle in memory of your loved ones that have passed away. See the notice for the programme of events.

Sunday 11th November, 2.30-5.30pm, at The Forum, Exeter University. Join the Archbishop of Canterbury for an afternoon of reflective conversation about bereavement, grief and finding hope. Tickets are available through the Diocesan website. If you are unable to access the website, please see one of the Staff team.

