

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 7

For 22 May 2016

Dear Friends

As we journeyed north through Taupo and Rotorua memories stirred awake. Especially as we drove through Ngongotaha, which was the centre of my first parish. I saw a house I used to visit and I recalled an incident. The mother of a six year old boy told me how her son came home from school looking worried and being unusually quiet. Suddenly he blurted out: “Mummy you don’t love me do you!” It wasn’t a question. It was more a statement which invited her to confirm— “No Robby, I don’t love you.” Instead she said: “Robby, of course I love you”, and gave him a big hug. He remained worried and she was puzzled at his upset. It turned out that a visiting Bible-in-Schools teacher had told the children that “God punishes those he loves”. Her son was sharp enough to see the implications of this. If his Mum loved him then she too would be into punishing him. He would be safer if she didn’t love him. Robby’s mother was upset and angry that such a teacher was being let loose on young children—and so was I!

Such a distortion of the Good News has deep roots—like a noxious weed. It is hard to get rid of it. Even the 42 chapters of the book of Job has only made a dint on the idea that loss, grief, accidents, illness, trauma and death are punishments from a God whose name is Love. In our culture we see the concept is alive and active when people say “What have I done to deserve this?” — whether it be an upset to our plans, a family problem or some major illness. Whenever we think this inside our heads or express it to others it hints at the lurking suspicion that we are being punished for something we have done wrong that has upset a normally loving God. I did some exploring of the passages in the Bible most often used to foster this idea. The details would bore you. In brief however 2 or 3 things emerged for me:-

- Most of the seeds for this baffling idea grow in the Old Testament.
- Nowhere did I find a Hebrew word that could be translated as “punishment”—the closest was a word meaning ‘to guide’ or ‘to instruct’. That sounds to me like a positive caring God.
- Some modern translations leave me with the feeling that the translators must be angry people who express it by loading it onto their image of God—if you get what I mean!

Sincerely - Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 23 May:	111	1 Peter 1:3-9	Mark 10:17-27
Tuesday 24 May:	98:1-5	1 Peter 1:10-16	Mark 10:28-31
Wednesday 25 May:	147:13-end	1 Peter 1:18-end	Mark 10:32-45
Thursday 26 May:	116:10-17	1 Cor 11:23-26	John 6:51-58
Friday 27 May:	96:10-end	1 Peter 4:7-13	Mark 11:11-26
Saturday 28 May:	63:1-6	Jude 17,20-end	Mark 11:27-end
Sunday 29 May <u>Pentecost 2</u>			
Ps 96; 1 Kings 18:20-21,(22-29),30-39; Gal 1:1-12; Luke 7:1-10			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 30 May:	91:1-2, 14-end	2 Peter 1:2-7	Mark 12:1-12
Tuesday 31 May:	85; 150	1 Sam 2:1-10	Mark 3:31-35
Wednesday 1 June:	123	2 Tim 1:1-3,6-12	Mark 12:18-27
Thursday 2 June:	25:4-12	2 Tim 2:8-15	Mark 12:28-34
Friday 3 June:	119:161-168	2 Tim 3:10-end	Mark 12:35-37
Saturday 4 June:	71:7-16	2 Tim 4:1-8	Mark 12:38-end
Sunday 5 June <u>Pentecost 3</u>			
Ps 146; 1 Kings 17:8-16,(17-24); Gal 1:11-24; Luke 7:11-17			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 6 June:	121	1 Kings 1:1-6	Matt 5:1-12
Tuesday 7 June:	4	1 Kings 17:7-16	Matt 5:13-16
Wednesday 8 June:	16:1,6-end	1 Kings 18:20-39	Matt 5:17-19
Thursday 9 June:	65:8-end	1 Kings 18:41-end	Matt 5:20-26
Friday 10 June:	27:8-16	1 Kings 19:9,11-16	Matt 5:27-32
Saturday 11 June:	112	Acts 11:19-30	John 15:12-17
Sunday 12 June <u>Pentecost 4</u>			
Ps 5:1-8; 1 Kings 21:1-10,(11-14),15-21a; Gal 2:15-21; Luke 7:36-8:3			

THREE PERSPECTIVES TO PONDER

- * When we rub the wood against the grain we can expect to get a splinter in our finger.
This is a bit of homely wisdom. Anyone who has worked with wood and run their hand along a piece of timber and done it in the ‘wrong’ direction may spend time both removing the splinter and nursing a painful hand. It happens. That’s the risk we take even when we are sensible and cautious. You can see the implications for daily life in general. The basic flow of life is towards peace, harmony and love. Another way of expressing this is to recognize that if we are not in tune with the vibrations of truth, beauty and fullness of life then don’t be surprised by the disharmony around us and the harsh discords that remind us of the fingernail screeching on the blackboard.

- * The sun which hardens the soap, melts the butter.
What might this mean for daily life? Does it imply that we can’t blame the sun for either melting the butter or hardening the soap? The sun just shines—and it shines on the good and the bad always, equally and without judgment. So it throws the responsibility in our direction. What we are in ourselves, the nature of our inner being, has a great influence on the direction and quality and outcome of our life. The mindset, the attitudes and the habits that don’t enrich our lives—can either harden or melt. Sometimes we need unhelpful hardened ways of seeing other people and the world to melt. Sometimes we need our deepest insights, our clearest visions to take firm shape and harden into strong intention. The Spirit of Life—the Love of God—the power of Creation will support our decision. We need to be clear about our desires and needs.

- * The craving for shallow comfort can murder the deep passion of the soul and then walks grinning in the funeral. (Kahlil Gibran)
Wow!
The poet knows that our desires can be dangerous. We have the power to choose. Jesus was passionate about tapping us on the shoulder, calling us to wake up and pointing towards the goal of infinite, unchanging, peace, harmony and love. He knows.

The Everlasting Love

When love beckons to you, follow,
Though his ways are hard and steep
And when he speaks to you,
believe in him,
Though his voice may
shatter your dreams ...

For even as love crowns
you so shall he crucify you.
Even as Love is for your growth
so is Love for your pruning.
Even as Love ascends to your height
and caresses your tenderest
branches that quiver in the sun,
so shall Love descend to your roots
and shake them in their clinging
to the earth.

Love threshes you to make
you naked.
And sifts you to free you
from your husks.
And grinds you to whiteness.
And kneads you until
you are pliant;
and then Love assigns
you to his sacred fire,
that you may become sacred bread
for God’s sacred feast.

All these things shall love
do to you that you may
know the secrets of your heart,
and in that knowledge
become a part of
Love’s heart.

Extracted from “The Prophet”
by Kahlil Gibran (1883-1931)
Lebanese spiritual teacher and poet.

Wide Awake

- ◆ To be completely awake is to be continually thrown out of the nest.

- ◆ What really matters is what we are choosing to do with the time that we are being offered on this wonderful planet.
(Pema Chodron,
Buddhist Nun)

- ◆ Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself.
If you must have desires, let them be:-

- ◇ To wake with a winged heart
and give thanks for another day
of loving.

- ◇ To rest at noon and meditate
love’s bliss.

- ◇ To return home at eventide
with gratitude;
And then to sleep with a prayer
for the beloved in your heart.

Before the world was made
God had already chosen
us to be his in Christ ...
Because of his love
God had already decided
to bring us to himself
—this was his pleasure
and purpose.
(Ephesians Ch 1:4 & 5)