

## Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> October



### Sharing

When I trained as a Primary teacher way back in the sixties, one of the things we were taught was how we should respond if asked a question to which we didn't know the answer. (If?!) Under no circumstances, we were told, should we pretend we knew or make up an answer because at some point we'd be sure to be proved wrong, and that would do our reputations no good. Instead, we were to say, "That's a good question, let's look up the answer together."

Fine, but it didn't need a child of Mensa-level intelligence to realise that particular response was usually code for "I don't know." An alternative – "I need to double-check that" - was a slightly face-saving way out with the same result, namely, you shared the process of discovery.

The truth, of course, is that none of us mere humans know everything, yet somehow we want some people to be all-knowing. Parents and teachers when we are small. Leaders in many spheres of life when we are bigger.

I'm sure you can see where I'm going with this. We are living in a time of not-knowing: though knowledge of the Covid-9 virus is increasing, much is still mystery and as for knowing what works against it, what we can do to mitigate its effects . . . well. But we are also living in a time when some people share their opinions as if they knew it all when they don't, and this confuses us still further. Also, none of it is good for the health of those in leadership.

Moses, carrying the burden of leadership of the People of Israel, was exhausted, a fact his visiting father-in-law, Jethro, noticed and wisely advised that he chose Elders to share in his burden. **(Exodus 18: 13-27)** He did as advised, and no doubt slept more soundly.

St. Paul struggled too. The Christians in Corinth were squabbling between themselves so much, listening to this one and that one (sound familiar?), that he had to feed them a liquid-diet Gospel rather than the 'meaty' Gospel that they should have been able to take in. **(1 Corinthians 3: 1-3)** and that was a loss to them as a community and to the people they could have helped.

And so, we look to Jesus who, having proved to his disciples who he was and how much they could trust in him came to the point when they could take more truth. **(John 15:7-17)**

“I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have heard from my Father.” (Verse 15)

No matter how old or wise we may be, there is no one on earth who knows it all, not only about the new virus, but also about life and about faith itself and the more we have the humility to assess what we are hearing and to share in the learning process, the better for us and, ultimately, for the world. This sounds hard, but remember, Jesus trusts us – he calls us friends, too! He’s given us the Holy Spirit to help us, to help us *always*.



I love this picture. They’re studying a Roman inscription which, in spite of considerable combined knowledge, proved indecipherable – we don’t always get an answer to our questions! What we needed, of course was a bona fide Roman to explain it.

A Prayer:

Living Lord, thank you for your gift to us of intellect and of insight to use for the good of all, and for curiosity, for the searching mind that will not give up until an issue is fully explored, and conclusions reached even if that conclusion is to admit to a not knowing.

Thank you, too, that intellect and insight come in many forms to create the right balance needed in life.

May we be ever willing to listen to the least as well as to the mighty.

In these times when questions seem to pile hard upon one another, when definite answers are sought although they cannot be given, we pray that leaders within all areas of life may have the humility to pause, to listen, to admit the fractional nature of their knowledge, to trust in the ordinary person’s capacity to understand, to consider, to hope and pray.

In a world of ‘influencers’ who shape so much thinking, we pray the wisdom of the Spirit that those of influence, whether in politics, the media or in matters of faith,

may pause, talk over with trusted friends what they are thinking,  
really reflect upon the power they have gained and seek to use it wisely  
for the benefit of all people and even of the earth itself.

Lord, with the world, we admit that we want certainty even when we know that's not possible.  
We seek leaders who know everything, even when we know that's not reasonable.  
We are afraid. We are lost. Lord, hold us in our fear and our lostness.  
By your Spirit, guide us all into peace.

We are afraid and lost, but we are also followers of Jesus who faced the powers of darkness,  
of fear and of ignorance and prejudice, and who trusts us to do likewise.  
We pray for ourselves, at this time when others may be looking to us to see how we react,  
to see how we cope with a curtailment of our freedom to visit who we will, to go where we please.  
May we be strong in how we deal with the present moment,  
but also humble in admitting, but not dwelling upon, our own sorrows.

Loving Lord God our Father, who is in perfect unity with the Son and the Spirit,  
draw us into a true unity of heart and mind, that we may face whatever the world has to give  
with a true peace and a shared wisdom. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen



*Blessings, Ruth*