



Sunday Service

Sunday 1st November 2020

The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity

All Saints' Day

Shoebox Sunday

Wisdom for living in a mixed up world (5)

Political power is as temporary as mist

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, your glory is the same yesterday, today and for evermore. Help us to rejoice in the faith that has guided your children throughout the ages and inspire our praise and prayers to proclaim that Jesus is Lord and Saviour of the world. Amen.

Bible reading

¹Who is like the wise?

Who knows the explanation of things?

A person's wisdom brightens their face
and changes its hard appearance.

Obey the king

²Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. ³Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. ⁴Since a king's word is supreme, who can say to him, 'What are you doing?'

⁵Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm,
and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure.

⁶For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter,
though a person may be weighed down by misery.

⁷Since no one knows the future,
who can tell someone else what is to come?

⁸As no one has power over the wind to contain it,
so no one has power over the time of their death.

As no one is discharged in time of war,
so wickedness will not release those who practise it.

⁹All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. ¹⁰Then too, I saw the wicked buried – those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.

¹¹When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.

¹²Although a wicked person who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time, I know that it will go better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him. ¹³Yet because the wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them, and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

¹⁴There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless. ¹⁵So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.

¹⁶When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labour that is done on earth – people getting no sleep day or night – ¹⁷then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

Ecclesiastes 8 : 1 - 17

Reflection : Political power is as temporary as mist

If meaning cannot be found in education, work, pleasure, money or religiosity, what about political power? - Alas, no is the writers conclusion.

1. The proper attitude towards government (v 1 – 6)
2. The limits of government (v 7, 8)
3. All political power is temporary (v 9 – 15)
4. But, even though we live in the mist, God's rule is for ever (v 16, 17)

So, how should we live?

- Even though it seems to make no sense, let God be God and trust in His rule.

A prayer for all those affected by coronavirus

Keep us good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.

Sustain and support the anxious, be with all those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may find comfort knowing nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Final prayer

Merciful Lord, grant us the wisdom to know that in all the uncertainties of this world, you are the one who brings meaning and peace through the self-giving love of Jesus who has conquered death, and whose rule will last for ever. In His name we pray. Amen.

Blessing

Lord God, hold us firm in our mixed-up world, and help us to know your peace and your presence, no matter what life throws at us.

And now may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for ever more. Amen.