

WEEKLY READINGS, REFLECTION & PRAYERS, 16.11.25

READING 1: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers and sisters, to keep away from every believer who is idle and disruptive and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat. We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

GOSPEL: Luke 21.5-19

Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down." "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?" He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven. But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. And so you will bear testimony to me. But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. Everyone will hate you because of me. But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life.

REFLECTION by Rev Tara

This morning's reading seem eerily relevant doesn't it? Reports continue of fighting around the world; President Trump is threatening to sue the BBC; journalists report on poverty and deprivation Are these what Jesus was referring to as signs leading to the end time??

The Greeks attributed the invasion of all ills into the world to the young, innocent, Pandora, whose curiosity led her to disobey her husband and open the chest full of all evils, temptingly given to them as a wedding present, locked. With those little voices calling to be let out who wouldn't have been tempted to check inside, even though told not to? Slamming down the lid on realizing her grave mistake, she nearly trapped hope in there for ever, but finally did let her flutter out into the sunshine as a small flicker of light in the world.

As Christians, we have our own version described in Genesis, but what **real** hope God holds out to **us**- so much more than a mere Greek flicker of light! The Old Testament tells us time and again how God's people turned away from His path resulting in various disasters, exile and devastation; situations that must have seemed utterly hopeless. Where was God? What was He doing for His people? But we also hear about God's faithfulness. God's people **WILL** thrive once more; Jerusalem **WILL** rise once again as God's Holy City; new life and new joy **WILL** come through the power of the Holy Spirit, from the God of love and forgiveness. God continually brings new life.

The situation for many across the world today can appear equally helpless; there are so many areas of war and conflict, oppression and deprivation; places where shortages of food and water are a daily reality; places of isolation such as prisons or communities where others always appear busy & fulfilled; people suffering through illness and disease. In ALL these situations we are called to pray for new life through the power of the Holy Spirit, which uses us individually if we will just answer that call; the Holy Spirit, working with and through the Church, in which we are called to play an active part...

The reading from Luke reiterates the overriding power of the Holy Spirit in times of adversity; God's faithfulness; and our need to persevere in our discipleship. The Jews of the first century were expecting the end of time sooner rather than later, accompanied by the return of the Messiah and judgement. But Jesus clearly points to a period of waiting; a time involving false prophets, wars and revolutions; a time requiring patience in all Christians, who will incur blame on Jesus' behalf. This certainly sounds horribly relevant to OUR times. "Not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life" Jesus tells us, reminding us of our need for faith in God.

One sign that awaited those early Christians was the imminent fall of the temple at Jerusalem in 70 AD, the temple which signified 1000 years of God's dealings with Israel. This must have been an act of utter devastation for the Jews, but it was needed if God was to vindicate Jesus- a sign of God's time. I wonder what we see as signs of our time, here; now. Surely technology- we live in a world in which man can supposedly do anything at the push of a button; where technology supposedly overcomes most problems. The internet is truly amazing when you think about it, making the world a rather small and accessible place. But there are also many spiritual signs around us. God is at work all around us- we need only open our minds to see more clearly.

So often our world seems to be swamped by poverty, natural disasters that obliterate thousands, terrorist violence that threatens peace, at home and abroad. Daily we see reports of such atrocities in the media. It can be very disheartening; we can feel so helpless. But God is at work through the humanitarian aid; through the relief efforts; through the fundraising. We have a responsibility to act and pray to make a difference,

however small those efforts may seem. We CAN work for peace. We CAN transform society if we allow Jesus to empower us. Too often the secular world attacks our Christian values; a world that values material success. Are we willing to give ourselves in selfless service to Jesus and our fellow human beings? One small act of compassion in the name of Christ can lead to many things.

We surely need to open our eyes to see all that God is doing around us; to open our ears to the call of our heavenly father, and open our hearts to respond willingly. Although our society seems so privileged in many ways the need for renewal here is urgent too, with many areas of social deprivation and need, huge imbalances in resources and people suffering physically and mentally. The need for spiritual renewal IS pressing. And WE CAN help to change attitudes, starting with our own communities; we CAN help energize the mission of the church, spreading the good news of the gospels actively around us, reaching out to those in need, in the name of Christ. We CAN give our money, our time, our prayers.

So let's praise God for our blessings once again today. Let's embrace the diversity in our communities and experience. And let's pray that God may empower **us** to take up the challenge to ourselves become signs of God's time, as we prepare for the coming of the kingdom, and Christ's return. Amen

INTERCESSIONS

Let us pray for our families and friends and all those whom we love, whether they are in close proximity every day or distant and unseen. May we be tolerant and patient in the face of the continuing coronavirus constraints that are so trivial in a global context. Lord God – Hear our prayer

Let us pray for our local community here in Crondall. We thank you for the good fortune we enjoy living in such a peaceful and plentiful environment. May we show our appreciation through kindness and generosity to those less fortunate than us. Lord God – Hear our prayer

Let us pray for our church and the spiritual leaders of all faiths – in our local community and at regional, national and global levels – that their examples and exhortations may inspire us to put others before

ourselves. Let us pray for the King and member of the royal family. Lord God – Hear our prayer
Let us pray for the natural world and for all creatures and habitats. May we tread lightly on the earth, consume less, repair, reuse and recycle to limit the damage we inflict; not solely for human benefit but for all living things. Lord God – Hear our prayer

Let us pray for the poor, the oppressed and the needy and all those trapped in intolerable conditions, in war zones, in authoritarian regimes and in areas of disease. Give them the fortitude to persevere. Lord God – Hear our prayer

Let us pray for those suffering poor health, injury, physical or mental illness. In our own village community we remember especially Simon Marshall, Geraldine Wolkins, Pat Evans, Megan Raw, Eve Vass, MJ Curtis, Tim Sturt, Jenny Gibson, David Evans, Dick Wallis and any others on our hearts. Lord God – Hear our prayer

Let us pray for those who have died recently and for all those who mourn them. In our own village community we pray for Vincent Hardy, Gwenyth Hall, Christopher Young, Liz Broad. Lord God – Hear our prayer

Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.