

Pew Reflections **Ordinary Sunday 6 [Epiphany 6] – Sunday 12 February 2023**

- Deuteronomy 10.12-22; Psalm 119.1-8; 1 Corinthians 3.1-9; Matthew 5.21-27

God gives us a choice – life or death. Choosing ‘life’ comes through obeying his commandments – in the words of the Psalmist, “Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk [in] the law of the Lord.” Far from judgmental, these readings all assure us of ‘life’, of the benefits of following God’s will. First among these benefits is the emphasis on our good relationships, specifically reconciliation. In Deuteronomy is the assurance that we have been chosen in mercy, and we should therefore show mercy to others. Paul implores the Corinthians to work together for God, and in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew), Christ teaches the importance of making our relationships peaceful ones, with emphasis on working together to achieve reconciliation with others. Here, the message is that when we work to have ‘right’ relationships with others, when we work towards reconciliation, this is an act of worship, a demonstration of God’s love lived through our lives.

- Give thanks to God for his righteous judgments which challenge us to reflect his love.
- Pray God will conform each of us to God’s will, so that we may truly reconcile with all others, and work together as God’s people.

*Text: Dr Helen Lancaster St John’s Cathedral, Brisbane © Anglican Board of Mission, 2023*

### Reflection

When first reading this week’s Lectionary readings, it would seem to be about upholding the ‘Laws’ - human constructs in response to theological reflection. In Matthew 5:21-37, Jesus, was calling people to reread difficult Laws with the lens of God’s unconditional love – everyone is loved for who they are, not how we see them, nor by human and societal constructs. St Paul reiterates this more specifically to Corinthians, who honoured impressive speakers as being convincingly ‘true and infallible’, even if the substance of their pronouncements held flaws and judgements. These days, across all forms of media, very convincing speakers make ‘Truthful’ claims, when those very claims are actually completely ‘fake news’, creating polarizing opinions, Sadly, in the bombardment of information, it is hard for churches to not ‘compete’, to lift their profile in the community space. Polarising opinions sometimes cause rifts even within a single denomination, let alone ecumenically. Our differences in ways of being, faith expression and church structure sometimes seem completely foreign to each other. This reading reminds us again, that above all else, God sees us as the whole body of Christ. If we are truly following God’s Way, as St Paul writes “The one who plants and the one who waters really do not matter. It is God who matters, because he makes the plant grow.” We are simply “God’s servants; partners together”. May we listen, learn and shed our own prejudices, so that, as God’s people, our partnership grows through sharing the truth of life-giving faith. May we recall God’s abundant grace, gentle love, who tenderly cradles us all, so we too, speak with truth.

NB: **Matthew 5:21-37** – a very helpful theological reflection in reading and receiving these difficult passages. <http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/MtEpiphany6.htm>

*Rev Anne Hewitt, South Australian Council of Churches, weekly reflection.*



# HOLY INNOCENTS ANGLICAN CHURCH BELAIR

## Readings - Sunday 12 February – Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

### Sentence

Blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord. *Psalm 119.1*

### Collect

Almighty God,  
you gave the law to guide our lives:  
grant that we may never shrink from your commandments,  
but, as we are taught by your Spirit,  
may fulfil your law in perfect love;  
through Christ our Lord and Master,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever. Amen.

### First Reading: Deuteronomy 10.12-22

<sup>12</sup> So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup>and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. <sup>14</sup>Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it, <sup>15</sup> yet the Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today <sup>16</sup>Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. <sup>17</sup> For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, <sup>18</sup> who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. <sup>19</sup>You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of

Egypt. <sup>20</sup> You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. <sup>21</sup> He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen. <sup>22</sup> Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven.

For the word of the Lord, *Thanks be to God.*

#### **Psalm 119.1-8**

<sup>1</sup> Blessed are those whose way is blameless:  
**who walk in the law of the Lord.**

<sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep his commands:  
**and seek him with their whole heart;**

<sup>3</sup> Those who do no wrong:  
**but walk in the ways of our God.**

<sup>4</sup> For you, Lord, have commanded us:  
**to persevere in all your precepts.**

<sup>5</sup> If only my ways were unerring:  
**towards the keeping of your statutes!**

<sup>6</sup> Then I should not be ashamed:  
**when I looked on all your commandments.**

<sup>7</sup> I will praise you with sincerity of heart:  
**as I learn your righteous judgements.**

<sup>8</sup> I will keep your statutes:  
**O forsake me not utterly.**

#### **2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 3.1-9**

<sup>1</sup> And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, 'I belong to Paul', and another, 'I belong to Apollos', are you not merely human? <sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only

God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. <sup>9</sup> For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. For the word of the Lord, *Thanks be to God.*

#### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 5.21-37**

<sup>21</sup> 'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgement."' <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, "You fool", you will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup> So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. <sup>27</sup> 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall not commit adultery."' <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. <sup>31</sup> "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. <sup>33</sup> "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.