

## Sunday Thought

6th November 2022 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

### Readings

Haggai 1: 15b, 2: 9  
Psalm 145: 1 - 5, 17 - 21  
2 Thessalonians 2: 1 - 5, 12 - 17  
Luke 20: 27 - 38



### All Those Ears

I am told that human ears are similar to fingerprints in that none of us have identical ones! I know hearing ability varies greatly especially with age but I wonder if it is possible to detect how much we retain of what we hear? I am sure much of worldwide discord and despair have an underlying cause of how truth is received, imagined, distorted and gossiped. I thought of that while reading today's scriptures which are all about distortions of the spoken word.

The prophet Haggai's words for instance. Nearly 20 years before he received his message from the Lord, the Persian emperor had allowed a tranche of 42,000 Hebrew exiles to return to Jerusalem. They were to rebuild the city and newly cultivate the land. At first, property development prospered and all seemed to be going well, just as God had promised. That was until drought reduced harvests and general productivity. Haggai was to tell the citizens the true reason for this. He shared his message with governor Zerrubabel, Joshua the priest and all the people. *'The reason for the restoration stalling is that you have not done what the Lord told you when we first returned. Your ears were only open to what you wanted to hear about new homes and plentiful supplies. What have you done about the Temple? You have neglected the Lord's house and forgotten his promise to be with you. God says 'I am still with you. I will give you success and prosperity, but you must put me first. A new Temple will be the sign of that.* The message was clear. How can you build God's nation without having him at the heart of it and its people life. Haggai's urging the people to hear the whole message resulted in great and successful changes. It's a word to challenge every generation - and ours. From the beginning God said, *My Kingdom means Me first.* Many ears seem to have missed that word in our time.

Paul writes about a divisive issue in the church at Thessalonica. That too was the result of mis-heard, misunderstood words, leading to arguments about their meaning. That has been a problem with theological issues in every generation. This time it was about our Lord's promise to return to the world at the end of human history, in glory as King and Judge. Some of the church members, influenced by the various religions surrounding them, had put their own interpretations on Paul's words. The 'end-time' has always been prey to fertile imaginations. The apostle's response is *'Don't be confused. Stay with the teaching we first had from Jesus. Remember, God chose you. He loves you.*

*He desires you to live a holy life of faith and truth. He wants you to share his glory! What more do we need to know while we wait for Day-Break?!*

Today's gospel reminds me how Jesus often faced controversy in his ministry. This time it was from the party of the Sadducees. They were a conservative group of priests and teachers who did not believe in resurrection to a future *heaven-life*. They put their question to Jesus about this, intending to make trouble for him. They phrased it in a rather amusing story which needs to be understood against a background of a bigotted, patriarchal society. The story concerned seven childless brothers who, as required by Mosaic Law, in turn inherited each deceased brother's property - including his wife who has no say in the matter! The question was, *'When they are all in heaven, whose wife will she be?'* Jesus' reply takes them *'back to basics!'* again. *Moses taught that God is Lord of the living. Therefore 'The dead rise to life' is all we need to know and in heaven there is no need for marital relationships in heaven.* Jesus himself has assured us of resurrection.



There is much controversy today about marriage issues, including this one. I have lost count of the of all the couples who have repeated after me, *'Till death part us'*. It is a good phrase for commitment but is it true? Archbishop Cranmer put it in the Book of Common Prayer based on an illustration Paul used when discussing [Romans7] Law and grace. Some of us feel sure that death does not separate true love. On a lighter note the story reminds me of Jill and Ralph, a lovely couple who boasted that they had quarrelled every day of their married life. After Ralph's funeral someone commiserated with Jill - *'Ralph will be waiting for you.'* Jill looked up to the sky with a half grin. *'Just you wait!'* she said. There was no thunder from heaven, unlike when a voice spoke to Jesus' disciples *'This is my Son. Listen to him!'* Lets be careful how we hear. The best way is to have Jesus at the Centre of our life and thought, and so to hear through the ears of the one who is Truth and Love.

#### **A prayer of Confused Praise** [based on Psalm 145]

Lord, sometimes when life gets full of 'busy', I forget about you.  
Times too when I struggle to understand your words from scripture and the way life plans out for me.  
I question how it was for you when you were battered with people's disbelief, and opposition - I think about the Cross.

Sometimes I think of you as great in every way – my God, my King!  
I remember your kindness and care for my life  
and the lives of millions of other people and creatures.  
There are times when I stand in your world of amazing creations  
when thoughts, words and questions are exhausted.  
Then I am content to feel your presence and to praise you with a simple  
*Alleluia I Amen!*

