

Sunday Thought

31st October 2021 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

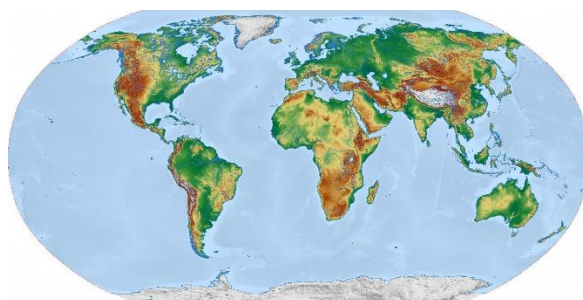
Ruth 1: 1 - 18

Psalm 146

Hebrews 9: 11 - 14

Mark 12: 28 - 34

God's World! Begin Here!



Today the world gathers a hundred miles up the road at Glasgow for the United Nations Climate Change Conference. I have heard many caring and enthusiastic voices saying, 'We have to act NOW to save OUR world!' We are bound to share their desperate concerns. The Christian has a slightly different emphasis in saying, 'We have to act NOW to help God save HIS world.' We begin as we are and here, where we are, - with God. That must determine how we think about and prepare for Climate change. A similar thought occurs in our readings today.

The passage from the letter to the Hebrews is a little difficult to understand without a knowledge of the contemporary Jewish thinking, but basically the writer is confirming how Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world. Unlike the Temple priest who offers animal sacrifice to reconcile people to God, Jesus IS the sacrifice! On his Cross he opened the way for the whole world to believe and enter into a changed life with God. I often take time to reflect on that amazing fact when in our communion service we say the words once spoken by John the Baptist - '*Jesus, Lamb of God. You take away the sins of the world!*' The whole world! And me! Mind-blowing! Heart-thrilling for us who believe it and claim it because to start with God, and me put right, can mean amazing things for the whole world. It changes our way of thinking from self to God and his purposes. That begins with the person next to me and involves those who are losing everything to rising flood waters, forest fires, hunger and disease as a result of our careless living.

Our gospel today takes up the theme. Jesus is approached by a young teacher of the Law with youthful visionary concern for the renewal of Temple worship and national life. He had been greatly impressed by the brilliant way Jesus answered questions from his own colleagues and teachers. Wanting to make his mark, he himself puts a question to the Master. He wants to know which of all God's laws is most important. Jesus told him gently what he should already know and would repeat every time he worshiped in a synagogue. The first and most important commandment is to love God in every aspect of your life and then to put that into practice by your love for all other people. The young man approved of Jesus' answer but did not expect the comment which followed, *'You are not far from the Kingdom of God!'* Once again it would be good to have more detail of that conversation. Did he ask Jesus what he meant by *'not far?'* I think Jesus' reply would have been, *'You can see it. You're standing at the door to it but you have to open the door and go in. Do it! Live it!'* For countless numbers since then that has meant letting God take over our lives so that all our thoughts and actions begin with him and his Way.

That commitment is similar to the one made by Ruth to Naomi in today's well loved Old Testament story which tells of King David's multi-racial heritage. There had been a brief climate change in Bethlehem leading to failed harvests. Naomi, with her husband Elimelech and their two sons became refugees in the neighbouring country of Moab. The sons married local Moabite girls. Some years later Elimelech and the boys had died. With corn harvests better in Bethlehem, Naomi decided to return to her family. Realising the racial and family problems involved for her daughters-in-law Naomi gave them the opportunity to stay in their own homeland. Orpah accepted but Ruth was determined to stay loyal to her mother-in-law. *'Let me go with you,'* she said. *'I will live with you, and make your people my people!'* It was a very courageous decision!

Our response to the climate change issues asks for the same sort of commitment, It begins with our relationship with Jesus. My life, my world, my hopes and dreams and everything about them begins with God and me! One day we shall be reminded of our recycling and other personal efforts to save the natural world, and maybe hear the Lord say *'Doing that for others was doing it for me and my world!'*

A Prayer (with Psalm 146 in mind)

With my heart, soul, mind and strength I love you Lord.
I wish to praise you with my whole life - every part of it.
Help me to begin with you in everything I think, say and do,
and to be faithful to what you tell me.
Keep me confident in trusting you as the creator and
sustainer of the world - of everything and everybody in it;
believing you are forgiving of what we do to
spoil the beauty and happiness of all life;
believing you can use us to renew what has been broken
in your creation.

