

**St Peter's Anglican Church, Bundoora**

**Proper 7 – 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Sunday 25/06/2023**

**Sermon Theme:      *Is your faith public or private?***

By Rev'd Stephen Monsieigneur

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**Matthew 10:24-39**

**New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)**

<sup>24</sup> “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master.

<sup>25</sup> It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

<sup>26</sup> “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.

<sup>27</sup> What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.

<sup>28</sup> Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

<sup>29</sup> Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care.

<sup>30</sup> And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

<sup>31</sup> So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup> “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.

<sup>33</sup> But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup> “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup> For I have come to turn

    “a man against his father,

    a daughter against her mother,

    a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

<sup>36</sup> a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.’

<sup>37</sup> “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

<sup>38</sup> Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

<sup>39</sup> Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

## SERMON

The final three verses of our gospel today are at best uncomfortable with Jesus declaring.

37 “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

39 Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.

I will assume that being here today you would admit to some sense of knowing or wanting to know Jesus and that in doing so we shape your lives by his teaching. Therefore, let's ask some questions.

Is your faith or quest for answers public or private? Are you bursting with such confidence that you cannot help but express your faith to strangers or does fear lead to silence? And if so why?

I live with ADHD and dyslexia. A reality I was not always confident sharing about myself. When I finished year 12 I did so with a score of 126 out of 500. Back then ADHD had not really been identified. Reflecting, I can see how as a result of my impaired abilities to perform, especially in exams, I grew to doubt even disbelieve that I was intelligent or had anything of value to contribute to discussions. I did not feel unintelligent, but I did feel like a fraud.

There were many crash/recovery experiences because of my learning disorders. Ursula and I met and after a few years of witnessing this pattern Ursula was sure I had dyslexia, and after me eventually reaching a place where believing I was a fraud, that God had set me up, I had a melt down and was ready to give up, Ursula arranged for me to see someone. Interviews were had, tests were done and eventually a diagnosis and commencement with treatment. It is no exaggeration when I say my perception of the world and myself changed. But it took me to swallow pride, to follow the wisdom of others. The Holy Spirit worked through Ursula, she heard and persisted with its call on her.

The point is that my fear began to restrict my action and sense of self-worth to the point where I believed that I was a failure and somehow had faked my way to the qualifications I had. Fear brought me to a standstill. But Ursula was not about to give up, her response was not rosy but it was what I needed to hear for it to be effective.

Through faith in Ursula's belief in me, I began to quickly realise that I was the person who through doubt and fear of being wrong, I had stopped believing in. God had not given up on me, rather the opposite. Because of Gods gifts of Ursula, wisdom of those who assisted me, even my own ability to reflect, I was able to recognise and accept the person I am, and importantly knowing the spirit would support me, I was able to see what had held me back as the catalyst to move forward. That fear no longer stopped me.

QUESTION. Who really can say 'I have never been afraid'?

I believe that at some point we have all known fear that whether we liked it or not has led us to make decisions we later regret. Whatever our fear to overcome it takes courage. Today we discover that we are not alone. Even those whom we look to for guidance, the founders of the church new fear and what's more were influenced by it. To get through the impacts of fear we

have had to rely on internal and external resources. For the disciples this resource is their Rabbi. Jesus is responding to fears expressed by his disciples upon hearing their mission and learning of the risks. In a human sense, these fears were justified. The disciples fear pain, suffering and even mortal death found in this life, but Jesus is assuring them, he stresses that what they fear is restricted to this life and that it becomes nothing against the joys of heavenly life.

This is a hard concept for humans to grasp when death is seen as the end rather than the time of transformation. If we reflect on the lives of the many martyrs that we revere today. They endured great difficulties and hardships eventually being put to death because of their faith. This willingness to die for one's belief was not out of fear of death but because they held firmly to the faith that through death, they would with rise again to be with Christ in heaven.

Thankfully for us at St Peter's in Bundoora, Australia, the odds of such demands as those placed on the disciples and saints being placed on us are infinitesimally small. However, we are through life called to make difficult decisions. For instance, when we confront a moral or ethical situation, which directs our actions? maintenance of the status quo or commitment to our faith and what it teaches us?

What are the fears that can stop us moving forward? Maybe it's the fear of upsetting family, losing a friend, or just looking different to the group. As I said a moment ago, whatever our fear, it takes courage to overcome it. But where can we find that courage?

Jesus tells us that we can find courage with him. Using the example of the sparrows; Jesus explains that if God cares so much for a sparrow, to us worth only two pennies, then how much more does he care for us. The sparrow cared for by God is not worried, so all the more reason we should not be either.

The challenge we face as followers of Jesus is making our relationship public.

As we grow in relationship with God through Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, we are called to make our knowledge known to the world. We are called to shine light on darkness, to bring God into the world.

What does this mean?

How can we bring God into the world?

First we must appreciate that we are the hands, feet, minds, ears and mouths of God. How we interact with the world every moment is Gods opportunity to act through us. Do we loving our enemy truly forgive them? If not how do we say we truly love them?

Do we come to church expecting to be served, filled by communion or do we bring ourselves as the offering to be served to others?

Do we give what we can afford or in a way that we do not impeding our comfort or do we truly sacrifice, walk in real sacrifice with Christ in discomfort for the wellbeing of another?

Becoming confident to speak of my ADHD and the journey I took and continue to take, was not easy. It required me to trust others, to recognise and accept my strengths. Because of Gods gifts of Ursula, wisdom of those who assisted me, even my own ability to reflect, I was able to

recognise and accept the person I am, and importantly knowing the spirit would support me, I was able to see what had held me back as the catalyst to move forward. That fear no longer stopped me.

The image of counted hairs on one's head is unusual, but again Jesus is very deliberate, versus 37-39 make clear just what priority our relationship with Jesus is to hold. Imagine how close you would need to be, how intimate such an activity is. This is how close we are called to be with Jesus. Jesus calls us not only to know him so closely but to make him known to the world with the same closeness. AMEN