

**TWENTY—SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**28 October, 2007**

1. **What does it mean ‘to be like a child’?** There are several answers to this, not all of them flattering; but in the case of Jesus’ words in Matthew 18. 15-17, the answer is in positive terms. He was speaking about trust. Little children are very trusting of those they love. They know and trust that their parents will feed them, keep them comfortable, and protect them. As they grow in that relationship, they believe what their parents tell them, they do what they say, they imitate them, they feel safe with them. And the trust they give to their parents extends to other people. Through good parents they come to believe in the goodness of the world. Children who trust, themselves become good people. That’s why it is such a dreadful thing when a child’s trust is not honoured and children are abused for it mars their innocence. It introduces them to a world which contradicts the qualities of the kingdom: joy, peace, gentleness, kindness, self-control...
2. **The question the young man asked (Luke 18.18-30) “Why do you call me good?” is pertinent then.** To enter into a relationship with God, who is Good, the young man needed to trust God and place his life in his hands. How sad that the young man had placed his trust in money! He might have known the Law but rules were not enough, his heart, his attitude, his will, needed to be God’s. He needed to trust God for his life, his safety, his comfort, but instead he looked to what money could buy.
3. **Our entry into the Kingdom of God or eternal life is a miracle of God’s grace.** We don’t earn it by just following the ten commandments. We find we have this treasure when we can let go of those things we depend on, those things we think we need for our security, and live our lives in trust, trusting in the goodness of God.
4. **Money, the means of getting it, and the things it buys** are all part of our lives and we need them. It is not the fact of wealth which is a problem, for financial security is important, rather it is the trust we place in it, the clinging on to it, the failure to use it for the good of others, the wanting more. Ultimately we will be judged not on how much we earn or what status in society we have, but on the depth of trust we place in God.

**NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**  
**7 October, 2007**

1. **Quite often we give God human characteristics** and behaviours which he just doesn’t have. An example of this is the view that God acts like a kind of keeper of records, totalling up our good deeds and our bad deeds and judging our performance on them. But God has absolute qualities, absolute truths and absolute expectation. We cannot earn his merit by doing what we ought to do. We can’t say, “God loves me” or “God owes me one” when I have done some good work. Doing what we ought to do is expected of us.
2. **Is God, then, unmoved by our behaviour?** God loves us when we love him and show love to our neighbours but also God loves us when we do what we ought not to have done and don’t do what we ought to have done. He loves us and has mercy on us and forgives us when we confess our sins. Does it matter whether we do good or not if God’s love is so sure?
3. **The parable in Luke 17.5-10** is connected to the saying about faith in Luke 17.6-7. The demands of God are absolute. His expectation is faith and the expression of that faith in obedience to the absolutes of God. When we do not acknowledge these expectations we separate ourselves from God.
4. **Like the disciples we may well pray,** “Increase our faith” . Faith can uproot a mulberry tree! Faith can move mountains! Faith is a gift which we can keep alight and guard (2 Tim 1.1-14). With faith nothing is impossible because with faith we will let the power of God live in us through the Holy Spirit. In our confirmation we seek God’s blessing as we reaffirm our faith (APBA p.87) and we promise to live our lives as disciples of Christ, loving God with our whole heart and our neighbours as ourselves. And faith will be observed in our good works of love, of forgiveness, of kindness to one another, of giving to those in need, and working for justice and truth. God does not need to reward us for these things. Rather he expects these things of us. The outward signs and expressions of our faith are but our bounden duty , ‘not seeking for any reward but only knowing that we do [God’s] will”.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

14 October, 2007

1. **We humans can be an ungrateful lot.** We feel it intensely if others fail to thank us when we think they should, for some graciousness or generosity on our part. We notice it in children when we remind them: "What do you say?" eliciting a perfunctory "Thank you". Some refuse to say thank you for what they consider their right or due, even refusing the common courtesies of thank yous to shop assistants and waiters. We have so much, yet many don't see why we should feel grateful and don't live lives of gratitude.
2. **In Luke 17.11-19**, one Samaritan leper came to give thanks, not expecting any further reward for doing so. Ten had been healed but only one recognized God's goodness and expressed his gratitude. Perhaps the others thought it was a right!
3. **To be grateful** is to recognize the love of God in everything God has given us. Every moment we live is a gracious gift of love. Gratitude takes nothing for granted, is constantly alert to the world we live in, the bounty we enjoy, the relationships we have and the mercies we receive from God. Gratitude is expressed in joy and praise of the goodness of God. For the grateful person knows that God is good from the experience of life.
4. **What if one's life is full of suffering?** How can one be grateful? The Jewish exiles in Babylon may have found it difficult to be grateful for their situation. (Jer. 29.1, 4-7) But God sent them there; there was a place to dwell, to be fed, to grow and to be prosperous. They needed to give thanks for their environment and rather than feel resentful, powerless, and unhappy. Gratitude is the intention to look for blessings, not giving in to the belief that you need or deserve or have a right to different or better things. Such an attitude can help you get through the worst of situations. It is the foil to jealousy and envy, to dissatisfaction and unhappiness, to bitterness and revenge.
5. **Gratitude is at the heart of our Christian faith.** "Eucharist" means Thanksgiving. Look at Thanksgiving 5 in APBA, p. 139 and see the reason for our gratitude to God. We are called to be grateful Christians and our congregations places of gratitude and praise, leading our communities in giving thanks for the blessings of this life.

## TWENTY—FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

21 October, 2007

1. **In this season of Pentecost**, we focus on discipleship and what it means to live the Christian life. We are formed as Christians by many things: Scripture, prayer, liturgy, service, and the fellowship of the Christian community. In all these things we can come to know God, to listen to him and speak to him, and grow in faith. The New Testament reading and the gospel today inform us about two of these.
2. **Scripture.** (2 Tim 3.10-4.5). There is no doubt that we are also in an age when people seek their own truth, and will follow strange myths, strange doctrines and strange groups to find the answers to life. We believe that the Bible is inspired by God and contains truth. It is the task of the Church, clergy and people together, to be involved in its interpretation, letting the Holy Spirit speak to us through its pages. It takes understanding of its literary forms, its sources, its context and its intention for us to come to understanding. It is the task of the Church to seek God's truth in its pages. Our Church takes the Bible seriously as the Word of God, a means for us to come to know God better and to hear God speak to us. We read the Scriptures at every service of worship, and we are encouraged to daily reading. Fortunate are those who can devote time to study for they will grow deeper into the mind and heart of God.
3. **Prayer.** (Luke 18.1-14) If persistence prevails for the judge who was corrupt (he had no respect for God or anyone) how much more will it prevail for a Judge who is compassionate to those in need. Persistence is associated with trust and humility. The tax collector, though sinful, thought only of God, not on his own sense of righteousness. He can find no source of life or salvation for his state except God. He casts himself on God's compassion, trusting completely in him. At times it may seem that God has forsaken us, does not listen to us, is far away. These parables urge us to persist, trusting completely in our God of compassion.
4. **Listening to God, speaking to God** are at the heart of Christian faith and practice. It takes time and perseverance to learn how to read the scriptures and to pray. Both are easy if we come with open hearts and minds and with expectation that we will meet our Lord in scripture and prayer.