



SUNDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

7th Sunday of the Year (C) Luke 6: 27-38

“This Gospel is too much for me”, a friend said recently. “Loving your enemies, turning the other cheek, going the extra mile and all the other stuff. It’s for the high flyers, the big hitters, the really holy people. We’re in a different league”.

We might feel some sympathy with that. It’s tempting to excuse ourselves from some of the Gospel demands. We do have to build the strength. But first be sensible with ourselves. You don’t get from the bottom of the stairs to the top in one jump. It’s one step at a time, two if you’re fit, or at speed if it’s an emergency. What’s not sensible is to stay at the bottom step and never go further.

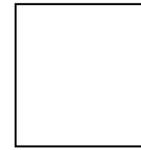
Jesus is ever the teacher. He’s describing for us what it’s like to think like he thinks, to live our lives as God wants human life to be lived. He knows it’s hard for us. He admits that’s the reason he talks in parables. Stories are a crafty way in, a graphic way to teach. The hope is we’ll step into the story and see more from the inside. Often we’re bystanders to the Gospel. He wants us on the team.

We have good intentions but they may stay as good intentions. Getting practical can mean making mistakes, being rebuffed, thought to be odd - and setbacks can disincite us to keep on trying. We might be over concerned about what others will think if we changed our behaviour ‘for the better’. They’ll certainly notice, but may never say they secretly admire your efforts.

We need to be clear. If I want to stop doing something, I have to have something to put in its place. The brain doesn’t handle negatives very well. To stop doing X, the brain has to picture X first before it can move from it. In other words, it reinforces the very thing we want to distance from. I need to set positive alternatives and that becomes my working agenda. Decide clearly what I want to do, build in as much rich detail as I want and it increases the likelihood of my making progress - if only a modicum of improvement.

We’ll none of us be perfect this side of the grave. But notice how Jesus tells us how God delights in our efforts - ‘a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap - the amount you measure out is the amount you’ll be given back!’

Whatever the effort, take the chance to give. We have discoveries ahead of us. I once heard a Macmillan Nurse give a patient some tablets saying, ‘these don’t work if you don’t take them!’ Great advice. Do nowt and nowt happens. The effort is worthwhile. Someone’s wellbeing depends on you. Jesus is forming us daily. Don’t be surprised at this. We’re here because he wants us here. Feel important. You’re never less than that.



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Pope Francis speaking of tenderness

Politics must make room for a tender love of others. What is tenderness? It is love that draws near and becomes real. A movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and handsTenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women. Amid the daily concerns of political life, the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts; indeed, they have a ‘right’ to appeal to our heart and soul. They are our brothers and sisters, and as such we must love and care for them.

All this can help us realise that what is important is not constantly achieving great results, since these are not always possible. In political activity, we should remember that, appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves love. Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. It is a wonderful thing to be God’s faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our hearts are filled with faces and names!

The great goals of our dreams and plans may only be achieved in part. Yet beyond this, those who love, and who no longer view politics merely as a quest for power, may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force.

- Fratelli tutti paras 194-195