



SUNDAY 30 JANUARY 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

4th Sunday of the Year (C) Luke 4: 21-30

With a fair wind and the sun shining, my mate Frank will admit to being just that - frank. In fact, he's honest enough to say he can be downright obstinate and he doesn't like change. When things are comfortably predictable he knows where he stands. Upset his world and he protests. He's very vocal at present.

We're no strangers to change. We can't freeze history. Our lives are made to unfold and everyone else's also. The world turns and we can't stop it. But we like to get into a rhythm, into identifiable patterns of living that give us a modicum of control. If we can fit things into what we're familiar with, we feel more in charge. It's good to have others of like mind around us confirming us in our view of the world, partial and prejudiced though it might be.

Jesus met folks he knew when he read and taught in the local synagogue in the village of Nazareth. It was a small place. He'd grown up among these people. He knew their names and faces. He also knew how they thought and how inherited customs drove their expectations. Sons continued the trade and business of their fathers. Jesus was doing just that - but they thought his father was Joseph - and they were not suited. It didn't help that he called out their lack of openness to new teaching. Their dangerous, menacing response made their wounded pride obvious. Sadly, they missed the Son of God. Mary would have to cope with the angry gossip.

This prophet of the poor shows us the face of God. He brings an unsettling message to challenge injustice, to question convention and to require active change. His gaze, gentle but penetrating, asks us to hear and see like we've not done before. No matter how well we think we understand, will we have the humility to admit we have more to learn and can we do something about it? Can we nod in the direction of a simple principle - 'If I can fool myself - I will'. Self delusion is not uncommon.

My mate Frank keeps saying "The thing is" even when the thing clearly isn't. What we claim to be fact may only be our perception of how things are. The facts may be different.

We make our own world. We tend to edit reality so we can manage our corner of it. Jesus invites us to face the real issues of our time and work for the common good. That may require changes in our thinking and behaviour. The age-old virtues of prudence, justice, courage and temperance may need a re-visit. Our God still has more to say - if we want to hear it.



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Pope Francis talking of Climate as a common good

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life. A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognise the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it.

It is true that there are other factors (such as volcanic activity, variations in the earth's orbit and axis, the solar cycle), yet a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity. Concentrated in the atmosphere, these gases do not allow the warmth of the sun's rays reflected by the earth to be dispersed in space. The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system. Another determining factor has been an increase in changed uses of the soil, principally deforestation for agricultural purposes.

If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us. A rise in the sea level, for example, can create extremely serious situations, if we consider that a quarter of the world's population lives on the coast or nearby, and that the majority of our mega-cities are situated in coastal areas.

- Laudato Si - paras 23 and 24