



SUNDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2023

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

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

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

31st Sunday of the Year (A): Matthew 23: 1-12

We liked big Terry but he was always bragging. He didn't need to. He had qualities that we admired and relied on - but his self esteem wasn't great. He had a difficult personal history. He'd tell you he'd a hard paper round as a kid. The phrase disguised a story he never felt able to talk about.

Our Friday night chats over a pint or two had developed into an open and honest fixture that meant a lot to us. It kept us sane, was a good support - and we'd proved that a few times. We looked forward to swapping and reviewing news of the week and the five of us shared a cracking sense of humour.

Ben was the intellectual and blessed with a great memory, a boon on quiz nights, he was a walking Wikipedia. The night we overheard big Terry telling about hobnobbing with some distinguished guy off the telly, we got on to looking round at the regulars who we knew as the salt of the earth, who didn't seek applause, who made our local world a safe place just by being here. It triggered a thought for brainy Ben who whipped out his phone and read a quote to us. It's the last few lines of George Eliot's novel Middlemarch. George was a pen name for Mary Ann Evans, a brilliant Victorian writer.

I was touched by the quote. "... The growing good of the world is partly dependant upon unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs". The movers and shakers of the world figure prominently as history is written, but ordinary folk keep the world turning and rarely get sufficiently acknowledged.

In the Gospel for today Jesus warns the same ordinary folk about the vainglory seekers, those with fine words but who excuse themselves from the very obligations they require of others. His terse warning is as relevant today as it was then. Some things don't change. Such individuals must be challenged. Their narcissism and disregard for the ordinary poor and their own sense of superiority should be told for what it is, as Jesus did and does. We are brothers and sisters, making life possible through our service to one another. Jesus is the teacher. Fatherhood, whether biological or clerical, must be modelled on the love given by our Father in heaven. Jesus came to serve and lived it. Our mission is the same.

We do need to stand out, to be people who don't hide the light God gave us—it's there to help others to feel safe and not be lost. We're no good as tasteless salt, we're meant to make a difference.

Maybe we should question ourselves about what we really think about all being equal. What causes do we support, who do we write to, what marches do we join? If we think we have it made, we're probably limiting our ability to learn. God still has more to say.



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ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP

Pope Francis on The Global Climate Crisis

Despite all attempts to deny, conceal, gloss over or relativise the issue, the signs of climate change are here and increasingly evident. No one can ignore the fact that in recent years we have witnessed extreme weather phenomena, frequent periods of unusual heat, drought and other cries of protest on the part of the earth that are only a few palpable expressions of a silent disease that affects everyone. Admittedly, not every concrete catastrophe ought to be attributed to global climate change. Nonetheless, it is verifiable that specific climate changes provoked by humanity are notably heightening the probability of extreme phenomena that are increasingly frequent and intense. For this reason, we know that every time the global temperature increases by 0.5 degrees C, the intensity and frequency of great rains and floods increase in some areas and severe droughts in others extreme heat waves in some places and heavy snowfall in others. If up to now we could have heat waves several times a year, what will happen if the global temperature increases by 1.5 degrees C, which we are approaching?

Those heat waves will be much more frequent and with greater intensity. If it should rise above 2 degrees, the icecaps of Greenland and a large part of Antarctica will melt completely, with immensely grave consequences for everyone.

- *Laudate Deum para 5*