



Sunday, October 15th, 2017 — 19th Sunday after Pentecost
Ezekiel 34:11-15a; Psalm 34:1-10; Philippians 4:4-9; Luke 4.15-21

1ST READING

A Reading from the Book of Ezekiel

For thus says the Lord God: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak,...

Ezekiel 34:11-15a

PSALM 34:1-10

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- 1 I will bless the Lord at all times; * his praise shall ever be in my mouth.
- 2 I will glory in the Lord; * let the humble hear and rejoice.
- 3 Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord; * let us exalt his name together.
- 4 I sought the Lord, and he answered me * and delivered me out of all my terror.
- 5 Look upon him and be radiant, * and let not your faces be ashamed.
- 6 I called in my affliction and the Lord heard me * and saved me from all my troubles.
- 7 The angel of the Lord encompasses those who fear him, * and he will deliver them.
- 8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; * happy are they who trust in him!
- 9 Fear the Lord, you that are his saints, * for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 The young lions lack and suffer hunger, * but those who seek the Lord lack nothing that is good.

Hear us, Lord, when we cry to you. Calm our bodies and minds with the peace which passes understanding, and make us radiant with the knowledge of your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

2ND READING

A Reading from the Letter of Paul to the Philippians

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:4-9

GOSPEL

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ According to Luke

He (Jesus) began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4.15-21

*Then he began to say to them,
'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'*

This is a special day for Isaac Brian Nisbet! For it is the day in which we receive him into the community, the family, of Christ. All of a sudden, Isaac has gained many, many new relatives in a manner of speaking. But what does that matter? Is it really going to affect how he lives his earthly life?

Will things turn out any differently? Will other folk see any difference?

As we walk in any crowd, can we tell who is baptised and who is not? Not usually. Baptism is a sacrament. Now what does that mean? There are variations in wording the definition. I like the description of St. Augustine. In the 5th century he described a sacrament as 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace.' Another way of saying it is that a sacrament is 'an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible truth.'

We as people are physical beings and we are spiritual beings. We are both! The physical, we can readily see, hear, or touch. It takes up space. It encompasses motion.

But there is in addition, much we cannot readily see. We cannot see our spirits. Also, we cannot see our thoughts, attitudes, or emotions. Yet, would anyone want to deny that they exist? We may see their effects, however. The same is true for the traits of love and hate. All of these come together in a way that defines who we are as human beings, as children of God.

In baptism we see people becoming members of the community of Christ. Among other things, it means that one is coming into what I would call the *culture of Jesus*. One is coming into the family of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We all have a goodness at our core — a goodness that is unleashed by those who would ask God to make God's presence known to us in our daily lives. In baptism, we acknowledge the presence within us of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is an invisible presence that is yet, very real. As Isaac grows and matures, it is vital that not only his family have a culture that draws upon the way of Christ — it is also important for the sponsors to seek to inspire an awareness of God's Spirit alive in Isaac's heart.

And what is the key element in Christian living? In the Gospel according to Matthew, Jesus tells us: *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'* This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: *'Love your neighbour as yourself.'* All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Nice words, but what can they mean to us?

To put things in the gentlest terms, our world seems to be increasingly troubled in recent times. Dialogue seems to be becoming a lost art. Confrontation is the favoured means of stating opinions. This is because the stakes can be high. Basic freedoms seem threatened. Solutions favoured by some have major potential negative consequences for a lot of folk. And sadly, God is seen as irrelevant by many.

It is in this environment, that we find ourselves as followers of Christ. And we may wonder how it is that we as baptised Christians are going to live and move in a changing global landscape. We see extremism on many fronts. And we ask what is it that the world needs to have? What is it that the world needs to hear? And how are we going to be part of the solution; rather than be part of the problem? How are we as baptised followers of Christ going to make a positive difference?

The answer is both easy and difficult. It is found in what it is to be a baptised Christian. We are to be true to our calling to live as Christ would have us live. Would that be by trying to legislate new detailed rules to manage what people can, cannot or should not do?

I do not think so! Rather, our role is to live according to the Biblical call of Jesus to: *'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'* And to *'Love your neighbour as yourself.'*

The members of the early church were referred to as 'followers of the way'. I think that is a very important reference. For lives based on the way of 'living love' are the best prepared to influence society for the better. Through loving examples in our responses to the challenges of life, we make direct impacts. Make no mistake, the examples of such actions are also noticed by others. More often than we may think, these examples in turn act as models that others are inspired to follow. Slowly, the world becomes a better place with release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, the oppressed going free, and the proclamation of the year of the Lord's favour.

With the indwelling of the presence of God, may Isaac grow to be a man of love — a man of peace. Indeed, may the way of Christ be his guide now and always.