

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost 19th June 2005
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Readings:

Genesis 21: 8-21

Psalm 86: 1-10, 16-17 page 312

Romans 6: 1-11

Matthew 10: 24-39;

Letting Go!

And even the hairs of your head are all counted! Does that mean that hair transplants are against the will of God? What about shaving one's head?

I shouldn't trivialize that verse because it is talking about God knowing us in detail and intimately — it is about our intrinsic specialness before God...
our value!

And I think it suggests the value we are to one another!

But going back to the beginning. I have suggested the theme for this week is "Letting Go" because not only in the gospel but in the Old Testament reading about Sarah and Abraham, Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael there is some "letting go" happening.

Letting go of what they imagined God's plan to be and finding another way opening up.

Similarly in the Psalm the author (David?) seeks a new way and becomes aware of the great love God has for him.

Then there is that very complicated attempt by the apostle Paul to describe how we are baptised into the death of Jesus as a sacramental expression of our letting go of our old self so that we may experience our new selves in relation to God.

Our baptism is a "one off" uniting to Christ in both his death and resurrection, the letting go of all that keeps us from God!
that we may experience the resurrection to newness of life.

It is about letting go of those things which destroy our relationship with God and which disintegrate our relationships with those around us — and I'm talking now about an active "letting go", a giving away that we might become what God created us to be. All the references in this passage from the letter to the Romans which relate to death, dying and being buried are past tense (in the Greek), meaning they are fixed and permanent.

The references to resurrection are future and conditional indicating a growing, changing — becoming!

We are baptised into Christ — it *is* reality but if we harbour grudges, unforgiveness, prejudice, it does not take away our being in Christ
but it does slow down our becoming what God calls us to be.

We are not entirely free to move on!

I hope we can examine ourselves and pray for clarity about what it is we need to let go of. —

In the story of Sarah and Abraham I think Sarah needed to let go of her bitterness!

I think she was bitter about her own role in the birth of Ishmael to Hagar.

Recall — how Abraham was promised an heir, but Sarah had no children and so, in her impatience, she gave her servant Hagar to Abraham, with the express purpose of having a child...

NOW she is bitter and angry! — Sending Hagar away will not remove the bitterness. Sarah has to deal with that!

But the story tells us that there is a future and that God calls us to let go.

In the gospels, Jesus is concluding his address to the twelve apostles and it is about letting go.

letting go of any idea of popularity!

if the disciple is like the teacher and they call the teacher Beelzebul — prince of demons — then how much more will they malign his followers?

Let go of fear so that you are not afraid to be open about your faith.

evidently, house tops were places of talk and whispering and gossip — Do not fear to speak openly! Let go of fear of enemies because you are of great value.

Let go of denial about our faith in Christ — recall Peter!

Does Christ deny us before the Father?

Let go of the old idea that the kingdom of heaven would bring peace — in fact it will stir up opposition even within families.

Let go of family! Now this would be shocking to the Jews who valued family so highly — but it is only in letting go that we can discover the new life.

Let go of life itself!

whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Jesus' challenge is very demanding and so it is but when we are able to let go, to give away, we find we get it back in a new and better way.

As we come to Confession and to Communion today, think about what it is you need to let go of to allow you to become more the person God calls you to be.

"Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."