

## Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost 2019

Like most of you no doubt I have frantically preparing for the Spring Fling! My efforts yesterday afternoon turned out to be far more difficult and time consuming than I had imagined! I spent time first with Leighton trying on clothes from Pandoras for the Fashion Parade. I have offered to be a model – I must have taken leave of my senses! Most of the things I tried on were either too big or too small and I ended up forlornly wandering around the Lamerton Centre in my underwear holding up clothes that were clearly never going to fit me! I then decided to cull some books and I ended up sitting on the floor of the study, (fully clothed) being unable to decide what needed to go! So I ended spending the second part of the afternoon in the company of Alan Bennett, the writer, playwright and comedian and the cartoonist and philosopher Michael Leunig.

In the eighties the BBC presented a wonderful series by Bennett called 'Talking Heads.' One of the talking heads was a Vicar's wife called Susan. I read through the text yesterday, it begins with Susan standing in the kitchen 'Geoffrey's bad enough, but I'm glad I wasn't married to Jesus.' It turns out that Susan is very unhappy with her lot in the vicarage and has turned to the bottle. Her husband Geoffrey, the Vicar is keen and ambitious, he thinks the Bishop is 'shopping around' for a new Archdeacon. The parish are aware that Susan has a problem... she was found pinching the Communion wine.

Susan tries to do the right thing supporting the parish and being the dutiful Vicar's wife and in a wonderful sequence she spends time with Mrs Belcher, Miss Frobisher and Mrs Shrubsole. She describes them as Geoffrey's 'Fan Club' they are the flower ladies. The exercise turns into a debacle of drunken floral one-upmanship. In the process of criticizing Mrs Shrubsole's arrangement called 'Forest Murmurs' Susan trips and almost knocks herself out on the Communion rail.

In typical dour Alan Bennett fashion the monologue doesn't end well. The problem is Susan has never engaged in worship; that has been her husband's business. She is simply an invisible person doing the everyday stuff, she involves herself in the mundane, nobody notices her and it is weighing heavily on her! And so to Michael Leunig and a wonderful cartoon of someone bent double: *Oh you poor thing what happened? I hurt my back. Oh dear don't be too glum try to lift up your heart. How did you do it? I was trying to lift my heart but it was too heavy.* The woman in today's gospel is one Luke's invisible people. Tellingly he writes that when Jesus teaches – she 'appears.' She is perhaps heavy hearted, taken for granted, probably always on the fringes of the synagogue. Weighed down by worries but above all not given an opportunity to worship. Jesus brings her forward, she can be seen, and

when he lays his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. Very soon as we turn our focus to the altar you will hear the words of the Sursum Corda: Lift up your hearts. The words have a long pedigree. They go back to the earliest descriptions of the Eucharist in the third century. What does it mean to say 'Lift up your hearts'? It is quite simply a call to worship, to turn our hearts away from the mundane and to lift them to God, to the things of heaven, to the things above. It is our call and invitation away from the business of earth to the business of heaven: the adoration of the Trinity.

For these few moments in the week we are called to keep Sabbath – literally 'to cease.' We are called to be so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly use! This Sabbath that Isaiah speaks of is one in which we unburden ourselves, we turn away from our everyday issues and worries from pursuing our own affairs. For Isaiah when we keep the sabbath every else falls into place, the created order, our cities, everything is renewed. When heavy hearts are lifted to God they are made new.

St. Augustine says this in one of his sermons: The whole life of true Christians is "Lift up your hearts", not that of Christians in name only, but of Christians in reality and truth. Their whole life is "Lift up your hearts". What then is "Lift up your hearts"? It is hope in God, not in yourself, for you are below, God is on high. If your hope is in yourself, your heart is below, it is not on high. And so, when you have heard from the priest, "Lift up your heart", you answer, "We lift them to the Lord". Make sure that you make a true answer.

Many folk today are heavy-hearted, we name this malaise in lots of ways, we pathologise it and we can be medicated for it. We can seek therapy for it, like Susan we can self-medicate! But rarely are we told that we need to worship and if we are it is the worship of something or someone that will ultimately let us down. We need to cease, and lift our heavy hearts to God... This is worship and this is why we take so much care over our worship here at St Philip's, we take care so that when we gather we can indeed know that we *all can* with confidence lift our hearts, that all are included, no one is invisible and I pray, that we can also help others lift their heavy hearts to God.

In doing so as we heard this morning from the Letter to the Hebrews 'you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.

Lift up your hearts **We lift them to the Lord.**