

Sermon Notes Sunday 4 November 2018

All Souls Bangalow

Feast of Title

There was once a wild goose who went to live with some tame geese. He was committed to liberate them from their mediocre lives. The wild goose lived with the tame geese for a year, and he enjoyed the rich food, comfortable shelter and easy life. Each year, when the wild geese flew overhead, he would flutter his wings, prepare to join them but settle down again in the farmyard. Ten years passed and the wild goose became tame, and it forgot how to fly.
Soren Kierkegaard

As we celebrate All Souls Day we are reminded by this liturgy, by its readings & prayers in word and song.....of our true identity.

Our true identity is citizens of heaven. Those whom we celebrate and remember today:

- The faithful departed
- The souls, if you like
- Our friends and family, circle above us
- Having thrown off their earthly cares and concerns, they have taken wing and soar in freedom.

We, on the other hand, live largely among the tame geese. We enjoy rich food, comfortable shelter, a life of routine.

What is a Saint and what do we celebrate today on All Souls?

Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, says that Saints “have a sanctifying influence on the whole church”; “they show us what is possible”, “making themselves nothing, they make room for God”.

He uses a different analogy to mine: he says a Saint is like a musician, the musician who fully becomes her true self, as she gives herself completely over to the creative intention of the composer, she is saturated, yielding herself, her soul, to the composer’s will.

This is what a Saint does: fully giving themselves over to God’s creative intention. It’s dangerous to make too much of an analogy, or worse, to swap back and forth between analogies! But using Rowan William’s insights: The wild goose, living comfortably amongst the tame geese hears the call, the invitation of the wild geese to join them. Hopefully they will rediscover their true identity, the original creative intention of their creator, find their wings and begin to fly.

On All Saints & All Souls a lot is said about eternal life and there is a tendency to think that eternal life is something they enjoy in heaven, but the scriptures are clear that eternal life starts now.

Over the past few Sundays in the lectionary

- We have been following Mark’s Gospel through chapters 8-10
- This is teaching about discipleship
- Here Jesus has been saying that in order to be disciples:
 - we need to relinquish:
 - status
 - material things
 - our own priorities
 - to be not motivated by *fear* but by *faith*
 - to put the other first.

In these ways, we show that we are not tame geese after all, but that we respond to a higher call beyond ourselves – the call of our creator to another way.

Three Sundays ago we heard of the encounter of Jesus and a rich young man/ruler. His question (if you recall) was “*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*”

A question that perhaps we can all relate to as we remember our departed loved ones and want to be reunited with them.

Jesus’ response was something the young man didn’t want to hear: he would have to give up his way of life: - and adopt new priorities in order to inherit eternal life. i.e. he *could* start living eternal life now. But sadly the comfort and security of his life had too strong a hold upon him – he wanted to stay with the tame geese.

Jasper, Sienna and Tracie are beginning a new phase of their journeys. Unlike the young man who refused to follow Jesus, you are being baptised and confirmed into this way of Jesus ...commissioned as his disciples. – You are called to “walk in newness of life (as St Paul wrote in today’s Epistle reading) ...united with Christ in his resurrected life”

When Fr Matthew told me we were having 3 baptisms and 1 confirmation on All Souls Day, I did have reservations – but I shouldn’t have really, because, by entering this Christian way you are also joining a wider community and fellowship, called the community of Saints; living and departed:

There is a statement from the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission in the order of service today: “In Christ, all the faithful, both living and departed, are bound together in a communion of prayer” – this is an agreed understanding that we are part of a wider community of believers, living and departed.

So in words of the hymn we’ll sing in a moment - we
“Give thanks for those who made their life a light caught from the Christ-flame, bursting through the night, who touched the earth, who burned for what is right thanks for the love by which our life is fed; a love not changed by time, or death, or dread”.

Let us pray

Blessed are you, Sovereign God,
ruler and judge of all,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
May the light of your presence which the saints enjoy
surround our steps as we journey on.
May we reflect your glory this day
and so be made ready to see your face
in the heavenly city where night shall be no more.
Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.