

Sermon and Readings 22nd Sunday After Pentecost 25th October 2026

Deuteronomy 34.1–12

¹ Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ² all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³ the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴ The Lord said to him, ‘This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, “I will give it to your descendants”; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.’ ⁵ Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. ⁶ He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷ Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigour had not abated. ⁸ The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended. ⁹ Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses. ¹⁰ Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. ¹¹ He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹² and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Psalms 90.1–6, 90.13–17

¹ Lord, you have been our refuge:
from one generation to another.
² Before the mountains were born or the earth and the world were brought to be:
from eternity to eternity, you are God.
³ You turn us back into dust:
saying ‘Return to dust, O children of Adam.’
⁴ For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday passing:
or like one watch of the night.
⁵ You cut them short like a dream:
like the fresh grass of the morning;

⁶ In the morning it is green and flourishes:

at evening it is withered and dried up.

¹³ Relent, O Lord; how long will you be angry?:

take pity on your servants.

¹⁴ O satisfy us early with your mercy:

that all our days we may rejoice and sing.

¹⁵ Give us joy for all the days you have afflicted us:

for the years we have suffered adversity.

¹⁶ Show your servants your work:

and let their children see your glory.

¹⁷ May the gracious favour of the Lord our God be upon us:

prosper the work of our hands, O prosper the work of our hands!

1 Thessalonians 2.1–13

¹ You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, ² but though we had already suffered and been shamefully maltreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. ³ For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, ⁴ but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵ As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; ⁶ nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, ⁷ though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. ⁸ So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. ⁹ You remember our labour and toil, brothers and sisters; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was towards you believers. ¹¹ As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, ¹² urging and encouraging you and pleading that you should lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory. ¹³ We also constantly give thanks to God for this, that when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not

as a human word but as what it really is, God's word, which is also at work in you believers.

Matthew 22.34–46

³⁴ When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵ and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

³⁶ 'Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?' ³⁷ He said to him, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' ⁴¹ Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴² 'What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?' They said to him, 'The son of David.' ⁴³ He said to them, 'How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴ "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'"? ⁴⁵ If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?'

⁴⁶ No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Sermon

Have you ever stopped to think about what people will remember of you when you're gone? Will they remember what you owned, or achieved, or how busy you were? Or will they remember how you treated them, how you encouraged them, how you made them feel? Our readings today invite us to consider what really matters in life.

In Deuteronomy, we come to the end of Moses' amazing journey. Moses has led the Israelites out of slavery, through the wilderness, and towards the Promised Land. But now, standing on Mount Nebo, he can see the land without being able to enter it. Imagine how Moses must have felt. After forty years of leading a difficult and petulant people, he reaches the very edge of everything he has worked towards, only to discover that someone else will complete the journey. There is something deeply human about this moment. We all have dreams we may never see fulfilled. We begin projects that others will finish. We plant seeds whose fruit we may never enjoy. Some of us are carrying unfinished work or unfulfilled hopes right now, and it is all right to feel that loss, as Moses surely did. It is especially true in the life of the Church. We work faithfully for years,

praying for growth, caring for people, encouraging others, and trying to make a difference, yet we may never see the full results. Others did the same for us before we arrived.

At the recent National Cursillo conference, I heard how the Cursillistas of a particular Diocese have made a point of sending encouraging emails and letters to the Bishops and clergy on a regular basis. They want to make sure they get encouraging and prayerful mail amongst the complaints and problems which normally fill their letter and email boxes.

Moses shows us that faithfulness is not measured by what we accomplish, but by our willingness to follow God. His work was not wasted. His leadership prepared the way for Joshua and the next generation. We are not called to do everything. We are called to do our part faithfully and trust God with the rest.

Psalm 90 brings us face to face with the passing of time. God is eternal; our earthly lives are fleeting. As we grow older, we realise how quickly life passes. Years that once stretched endlessly before us suddenly feel very short, and we begin to ask different questions. Not “What have I achieved?” but “Have I made a difference?” Not “How much have I amassed?” but “How much have I given?” Not “Was I successful?”

But “Was I faithful?”

The psalm ends with a prayer: “Prosper the work of our hands.” What a fitting prayer for our parish and our community. Lord, take the ordinary things we do (the meals we prepare, the people we visit, the prayers we offer, the kindness we show) and use them for your purposes. In God’s hands, even the smallest act of love can have a lasting impact.

Paul gives us a vivid picture of what this looks like. He reminds the Thessalonians that he and his companions did not come seeking praise, power, or personal gain. They came with love. Paul says they cared for the Thessalonians as a nurse tenderly cares for her own children.

Stop and picture that: a nurse, up in the night, patient with a child who cannot yet say thank you. That is Paul’s image of ministry. Not authority exercised through control, but leadership expressed through tenderness, patience, and love.

Paul was not simply interested in delivering a message. He was willing to share his own life with the people. That is what Christian ministry looks like. It is not just preaching sermons, organising services, or running church programmes. It is about relationships. It is noticing the person who is struggling, listening to someone who is lonely, offering encouragement when life becomes difficult, and walking alongside others. Sometimes the most powerful sermon we preach is not spoken from a pulpit. It is lived through the way we treat one another.

And then we come to our Gospel reading. A lawyer approaches Jesus with a question: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Matthew tells us he asked it to test him. It was a reasonable question, since Jewish religious life was shaped by many commandments and teachers often debated which mattered most. But it was also a trap. And Jesus, handed a trap, answers with the heart of the whole law:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments, Jesus says, hang all the law and the prophets.

Everything comes back to love. But notice something important. Jesus does not say that loving God is enough on its own. Nor does he say that being kind to people is all that matters. He brings the two together. Our love for God must shape the way we treat people, and our love for people should flow from our relationship with God. That sounds simple enough, doesn’t it?

Yet living this out is another matter altogether. It is easy to love people who agree with us, appreciate us, and treat us kindly. It is much harder to love the person who irritates you, disagrees with you, or has hurt you. Jesus doesn’t add a qualifier such as “when it is convenient.” He simply says, “Love your neighbour.”

Sometimes that love means forgiveness. Sometimes it means patience. Sometimes it means standing up for someone who is being treated unfairly. And at times it means putting aside our own preferences for the good of another person.

Love is not simply a warm feeling. Love is a decision that becomes visible through our actions.

Then Jesus turns the question around. He asks the Pharisees whose son the Messiah is, and why David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him “Lord.” Jesus is more than a wise teacher offering good advice. He is the Messiah, the Lord who calls us into a new way of living. We do not learn to love by trying harder alone. We learn what genuine love looks like by knowing him, the one who loved us first and gave himself for us.

I wonder what would happen if every morning we began our day with two simple questions: How can I show my love for God today? And who needs to experience God’s love through me?

Perhaps it is someone in our own family, a neighbour who lives alone, or someone in our congregations whom we have not spoken to for a while. Or perhaps it is someone experiencing homelessness, struggling financially, or feeling forgotten by the wider community. We do not have to change the whole world in one day. But we can change someone’s day through a small act of kindness. And sometimes those small acts become the very things people remember for the rest of their lives.

One day, like Moses, each of us will come to the end of our earthly journey. And when that day comes, I doubt that what will matter most is how many meetings we attended, how many jobs we completed, or how much we possessed. What will matter is whether we loved. Whether we loved God faithfully. Whether we loved others generously. And whether we made room in our lives for compassion, forgiveness, and grace.

So, the challenge for us this week is wonderfully simple: Love God wholeheartedly. Love people generously. And leave the rest in God’s hands. Because a life lived in love is never a life wasted. Amen.

Prayer

Loving and eternal God, you have blessed us with the gift of life and called us to walk faithfully in your ways. Teach us to number our days wisely, to serve with humility, and to love you with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves. Help us to see Christ in those who are lonely, vulnerable, or in need. May our words bring encouragement, our actions reflect your compassion, and our lives bear witness to your love. Bless the work of our hands, Lord, and may all that we do bring glory to your name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.