

Homily – 21st Sunday of the Year – 22nd August 2021

I was reading again and again the Bible passage from Judges 9:7-15, and reflecting on it with regard to the state of leadership in Scotland today.

Jotham was one of the few of Jerubbaal's 70 Sons to escape Fratricide by Abimelech his brother who in his thirst for power in Israel, killed off, nearly all potential rivals.

Jotham describes those who are good, like 'sweet fruit' are reluctant to pick up the chain of power, and instead leave it to those who become a 'thorn on the flesh' to the whole population.

'Good fruit', like so called 'Good Folk' are often unwilling to forgo their self-worth for the sake of a higher and more noble cause – As a result, society is in a much more dangerous and perilous position.

Joshua, son of Moses, warns the tribes of Israel, in line with Jotham, that if you choose in your own mind not to serve God you make the country a much more dangerous place.

If you desert God, and serve false idols; He will in turn, maltreat you and the ultimate conclusion is destruction. Apostasy from God is disaster for the world. Joshua and Jotham, recognised, though it is hard and at times upsetting that they were called to show leadership when other good folk were lost or had run away.

In the Gospel today there is a critical moment where the apostles + disciples of Jesus were upset in some cases, by his forthright teaching and were tempted to run away. He had just taught them in his farewell discourse that his body is real food and His blood is real drink. He is teaching the world that He is God! And that as the Son of God, to be a true disciple we must share in his presence in Holy Communion. He's teaching them that the world needs Him at the centre of our moral spiritual teaching. Sacred food that fuels the heart, mind and soul. Energising his followers to take Christ centred positions of leadership in the world. – Family, work and faith.

The secular danger for our society in Scotland today as elsewhere is a lack of courage for Christ centred leadership. Respectable people are shying away from positions of responsibility for fear of retribution and litigation. Head teachers, Clergy, Senior Medics, Professors at University, Political Leaders. As a

result, more extreme and unsuitable people are assuming positions of power that further the de Christianisation of our society.

Political correctness sees Christian morals and ethics as a threat to liberal individualism. Moral absolutes are ignored in preference to whatever makes anyone or anything 'Feel Good'. Scotland is still nominally a Christian Country with 55% of the population professing a belief in God, Father, Son and Spirit. However, this is systematically ignored and frozen out by politician, media and business. We now have this strange contradiction where a non-believer can send their child to a Catholic School and has the right to withdraw their child from taking part in Religious Observance.

That it is now rightly politically + morally forbidden to blaspheme or insult the Muslim Religion but it is seemingly permissible to blaspheme and denigrate the Christian Religion. Petitions to the BBC and Netflix go ignored (recent film release @ Cannes).

The truth is, that the majority of population who are reasonable and upstanding lament this erosion of our Christian values. But too often sit on their hands and are afraid to speak out. As was said by one learned philosopher. The downfall of the world is not simply caused by bad people, but more so by good people who sit on their hands and do nothing. – Yes, there are many upsetting things happening, and we too can be upset by them.

But don't see it always as someone else's problem – Look to Christ, as St Peter does, - Saying, 'Who else can we go to, You have the message of eternal life'. Let me too, stand by my Christian ethic, my morals, my principals, even if I get pilloried by a court.

Let me stand up, vote for and defend the teachings of my faith, even if it means going to Parliament. Mealey mouth, weak minded Christians, lacking courage are no good for the world.

God Bless you ALL,

Fr Jeremy Bath