



11 am Choral Eucharist 9th Sunday after Trinity

There we were, enjoying these lazy days of August and suddenly, spluttering on our Aperol Spritz, we have the end of the world to contend with. Amongst a longer discourse on the end of the world Jesus uses more of his typical end times images: fire, division and breakdown, looming clouds.

There are certain people that are obsessed with the end of the world. They have clearly forgotten Jesus' words 'No one knows about the day or hour' except the Father (Matt. 24.36) and at other times (Mark 12.27) when people quiz him about the details of the hereafter He says leave the afterlife for afterlife, it's safely in God's hands.

And that is generally a good policy. When people ask me about heaven and hell, I find the most honest answer, the most Scripturally faithful, and theologically sound answer I can give is the good news that those things are all in the hands of the all-loving Father, not mine. It's His call, and not for me to say.

But even so, today's words of Jesus recorded by St Luke pull us up short. They remind us, that although Jesus doesn't want us to be obsessed with the exact date and manner of the end of the world, we also can't afford to ignore it entirely. It seems, unsurprisingly, that somewhere between a) crazy-doomongering and b) not being able to see beyond the end of our nose is a good idea...

We see again, that so much in our world today that claims to be 'real life' is actually a jolly sight less than real. Well that won't do. Being a Christian is a quest to be truly living. Real, honest, true life. And that means being honest and really living in relation to life's foundational realities: God and us, us and God. Living each moment, honest about where life has come from, what it's for, and where it's heading; and by that we mean God and us, us and God.

And with today's focus in mind, that might mean being honest about the fact that life does not last forever. To trivialise death and grief and all that accompany them is not part of our faith. But, we are also called to live each day in the knowledge that '*this*' will not last forever. I have just come back from holiday in Spain, where there is a rich and long history of Memento Mori – remembering death. This can seem morbid or threatening or weird to us. But actually, seen

right, it is a joyful and liberating way of living honestly. I live today, thankful for today, in part because I know today will not last forever. I live today in the knowledge that today is part of a *greater story*. So for today, so for my whole life. Once I've admitted to myself that this life is not all there is, then comes the perhaps even greater challenge of actually living each day in honest relation to that.

We as Christians seek meaning and purpose in our lives, by having a greater context for meaning and purpose than the end of our noses. Like being in a room, and pretending the rest of the house doesn't exist. Instead, we see the whole house – the great story of God's love for creation, Christ, His Church, Faith, Hope and Love and our destiny of life in God – and that gives us the meaning and purpose for being where we are now.

Seeing clearly and living really. That is the Christian understanding of life and death.

And the Christian understanding of judgement and the end of the world is simply to be confronted with the full wonder of the purpose and meaning (that great story) that we have sought to start living by already. To start living as citizens of heaven now.

Death, says Dumbledore, is but the next great adventure. Please believe me, I do not wish to trivialise our experience of death from where we are. Simply to be reminded by Christ, that where we are, is not everywhere.

Jesus' words in today's Gospel make no sense (they are cruel and threatening) unless we see that the ructions at the end of the world of which He speaks are like cosmic tectonic plate movements. Bumpy, but the necessary doorway to the perfect life and love that God made possible for us by giving himself on the cross and defeating death. But viewed in the light of the Resurrection, viewed as the tectonic plate-like movements that they represent; viewed within the greater picture of the Faith we will profess in a moment: then they are words to live by. These words make no sense, none of this makes any sense, unless Jesus is risen and our purpose and meaning has finally been revealed in Him.

I'll end with words that continue to inspire and challenge me. Hold them with the idea of trying to live honestly the realities of this world and the next as our purpose and meaning. They were told to me by a friend: 'I have tried to live in a way that makes no sense unless Jesus is risen'. 'I have tried to live in a way that makes no sense unless Jesus is risen'.