

Readings for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

3rd August 2025

First Reading: Hosea 11:1-11

Hear the word of the LORD, O people. When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols.

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them. They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. The sword rages in their cities, it consumes their oracle-priests, and devours because of their schemes. My people are bent on turning away from me. To the Most High they call, but he does not raise them up at all.

How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

They shall go after the LORD, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the west. They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria; and I will return them to their homes, says the LORD.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-11

If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things – anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Gospel: St Luke 12:13-21

Someone in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.' But he said to him, 'Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?' And he said to the crowd, 'Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.'

Then he told them a parable: 'The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, "What should

I do, for I have no place to store my crops?" Then he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.'" But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.'

A Reflection for the Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Last Sunday evening, I went to see the film being shown at the Ferry Terminal: *Nae Pasaran*, which means 'they shall not pass'. With apologies to those who were also there on Sunday, and with thanks to information on the Screen Scotland website, I want to tell you a little about it.

In 1973, the democratically elected government of Chile under President Salvador Allende was overthrown in a military coup which brought General Augusto Pinochet to power. In the aftermath of the coup, many supporters of the previous government, and those who opposed the military government, were imprisoned, tortured and murdered. The film tells the extraordinary story of a group of workers at the Rolls Royce factory in East Kilbride who, in 1974, showed their support for the people of Chile by refusing to carry out vital repairs to engines of the Chilean Air Force's Hawker Hunter planes, which had been used during the coup. The factory in East Kilbride was the only place in the world where these engines could be repaired. The boycott endured for four years but the Scottish workers never knew what impact they had; for them it was a matter of conscience and an act of solidarity.

The filmmaker, Felipe Bustos Sierra, himself the son of a Chilean exile, reunited the leading figures of that boycott and also sought out Chilean survivors of that period to tell their side of the story. They were mostly victims of the Pinochet regime's brutality but also included the former head of the Chilean Air Force. The film demonstrated just how significant the actions of the Rolls Royce workers were. Despite claims made at the time, the boycott managed to ground half the Chilean Air Force, significantly reducing the Chilean government's air power and resulted in extraordinary attempts to repatriate the engines to Chile. The film also revealed how some survivors heard of and drew strength from this Scottish act of solidarity. Some, who fully expected to be executed, were suddenly and mysteriously released into exile.

I came out of the screening with many thoughts swirling in my mind, but two in particular. Firstly, as I have written and spoken about recently, the importance of doing what we believe is the right thing whether or not we think it will have an effect. These Scottish men were guided by an inner moral compass to do what they believed was right. Indeed, at one point, when the unrepentant Chilean Air Force General likened them to terrorists, the filmmaker pointed out that the leader of the boycott was a Christian. It was forty years before the Scots found out that indeed they did have an effect, and just how significant that effect was.

And secondly, the importance of recognising our common humanity with others around the world and treating them accordingly. At one point in the film, these four former boycott organisers recognised that, if they had been in Chile at the time, it would have been them being imprisoned, tortured and murdered.

With the film in my mind, when I looked at the readings for today, I was struck by the last part of the passage from Colossians. Paul writes: 'you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the

new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek or Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all'.

There is so much packed into this. When we become Christians, we are changed. Our old attitudes and ways are recast by the embrace of God's love and grace to become a 'new self' as Paul puts it. The 'new self' is one that follows Christ who said that the greatest commandment is to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. This renewal is a process not a one-off event; Paul says 'is being renewed', not 'was renewed'. It is a process that, Paul says, enables us to conform ever more closely with the image of the creator, the image of God. And as we all conform ever more closely with the image of God, we realise that there are no distinctions between us. We have a common humanity: 'Christ is all and in all' as Paul puts it.

Part of recognising common humanity is, I believe, to recognise our indebtedness to God for God's love and generosity towards, not only towards us but towards all people. The passage from Hosea reminds us of that, as I said last week. Despite the people's many failings, and their lack of faithfulness, God remained compassionate and faithful and would do so until they returned in penitence.

But God's love and generosity, and any recognition of our common humanity, is something that seems to have completely passed by the rich man in the parable in today's Gospel, sometimes referred to as parable of Rich Fool. He was storing up wealth for himself, but completely missing the point.

We are told that the rich man's land produced abundantly. That in itself was a huge gift in an uncertain world. For sure, he may have put effort into achieving this, perhaps by improving the soil and careful husbandry of the crops, but that doesn't guarantee a successful harvest. He remained at the mercy of many things outside his control – weather, pests and diseases. Also, he almost certainly depended on the assistance of others to achieve this abundant harvest – those who helped plant, care for and harvest the crops. Yet, having received this bounty, his sole concern was to ensure suitable storage facilities so that he could enjoy a good life.

In some ways we could say that the rich man had done everything right. He had stewarded his land and reaped the rewards; so far as we know, he had not harmed others in the process, and he had been prudent and safeguarded his own interests. We are not told if he had a family but, if so, they were well provided for.

Money in itself is not bad. It is a token we use in the exchange of labour and goods; it houses, feeds and clothes our families; our taxes and our charitable giving build hospitals, feed the homeless, teach our children, fund our churches. Jesus himself was dependent on donations of others to support his ministry. But money also divides – there are the 'haves' and the 'have nots' of the world; money leads to greed and envy; money or its substitutes can obsess us – either our bank balance or the things we buy with that money, be it works of art, exotic holidays or designer clothes. As these examples show, it is our attitude towards money that is so often the problem.

In the parable, the rich man's problem was his attitude. He showed no hint of gratitude either to God or to others, either for his gifts and talents that enabled him to farm well, or for the good fortune of favourable conditions for his crops, and certainly there was no hint of a suggestion about sharing his abundance, even with those who helped to provide it. He was greedy: his sole concern was for himself. But, as he found out, careful management of assets does not bring peace and security because, ultimately, he was not in control of his life. That is perhaps the most disturbing thing about this parable. We probably all treasure the illusion of being in control of our lives. We pride ourselves on

our effort and hard work, that we can meet our needs, and maybe then some, that we are not a drain on others. That's what our society teaches us is good and sets value on. But the rich fool was shown that this is false treasure. God said to him 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' As the saying goes, you can't take it with you.

The parable challenges us to live the only kind of life that matters, the life that Jesus modelled for us, a life for others. A life that loves our neighbours as ourselves and recognises our common humanity with those we may least expect. A life that, Jesus tells us, that is rich towards God.

What does being rich towards God mean? Loving God with our whole heart is being rich towards God. Loving our neighbour as ourselves is being rich towards God. How does that manifest itself in our lives? In many ways, but three things that I think it includes: firstly gratitude to God for the many gifts and blessings that have been entrusted to our care. Secondly, being generous rather than grudging in sharing what we have, not just with our nearest and dearest but with the neighbours we don't know, the neighbours far away, the neighbours in need. And thirdly, it means caring about the well-being of others, all others, and living lives that reflect that care.

The rich man in the parable may have missed the point but the workers at Rolls Royce in East Kilbride did not. They did what they could with the resources available to them, what they believed was right, and the effect on others far away facing the darkest of times was far beyond what they ever imagined possible. They were rich towards God. And doing what we can, what we believe to be right, with the resources we have been given, is what we are called to do to be rich towards God.