

Readings for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

19th October 2025

First Reading: Jeremiah 31:27-34

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals. And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD. In those days they shall no longer say: 'The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 3:14-4:5

Continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

Gospel: St Luke 18:1-8

Jesus told his disciples a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. He said, 'In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, "Grant me justice against my opponent." For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, "Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming."'" And the Lord said, 'Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?'

A Reflection for the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

from Rev'd David Higgon

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us a story of the need to be persistent in prayer and of the need not to lose heart, or to give up on hope; it is a story that intertwines the need for persistence in prayer with our faith in God, who is a God of justice and who loves and cares for us and his creation.

The story centres on an arrogant judge who fears no one, not God or any person, and a poor widow who is determined to achieve justice for a wrong done to her. Basically, the widow nags and annoys the life out the judge with her demand for justice, until he eventually gives in to her to stop her wearing him out by her persistence.

We are not told how long she has been waiting and hoping for justice, or what the wrong she had suffered, or what justice she was seeking. The story implies that she had been waiting a long time because it has taken time to wear the judge down to grant her justice.

The moral of the story is that God will grant us justice if we remain faithful to him both in our prayer and in our faith and in the hope we have for justice that accompanies our faith.

Prayer, faith and hope are closely interrelated and many of us struggle with our hope for the future, for justice for the widow, the orphan and the oppressed of our world, and justice for God's own creation.

In our everyday life, our hopes and prayers can sound little more than wishful thinking. I often leave the house hoping I remembered to lock the door and praying that no one will come and find it unlocked. The truth is that the door is either locked or it is not and no amount of hope or prayer will change that. You can hope and pray that your lottery ticket will win you millions of pounds, but we know that the odds against that happening are immense.

Hope can also be a blind belief that things will get better when all the evidence suggests otherwise, and such hope and prayer is ineffective. I don't think that any of us are immune to misunderstanding hope. Is our hope and prayer only related to an eternal future rather than to the everyday material creation we live in? For the oppressed, the hope for justice may only be seen as a future beyond the here and now, and for us, our faith informs us that our hope for the future is in God's hands but that doesn't absolve us from confronting the vital issues of our day and of fighting for justice.

The widow in our story was persistent in demanding justice. It is her doggedness that results in justice being served.

So, what should we understand by hope? Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, tells us that when all things are stripped away, our rituals and our worship, when prophesy ends and knowledge fades, all we are left with is faith, hope and love. Hope is an essential core of our Christian identity, but it doesn't stand on its own, it is intertwined with faith and love. It is our hope in God's goodness and love that makes hope possible, and love binds hope and faith together to make our prayers for justice a possibility.

Our hope is anchored in the God of love, the creator and sustainer of the universe. It is confidence in the promises of God which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ and are sustained by the Holy Spirit, and it is this hope that inevitably leads to action. When the hope we cling to is grounded in God's love for the world and God's heart for justice, we are called to care for creation and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

How does this hope we cling to sit with what we see in the world today? We live in times of indifference, apathy and greed towards the world God has made. We have put corporate and individual self-interest above the good of the earth and our neighbour, yet hope is renewed in God's act of redeeming the world through the life and death of Jesus Christ, and this act of redemption is not just for human beings, it extends hope for the whole of creation.

We can open our hearts to let God work through us, to work with God to offer new life to the people and places of the world who have been so badly damaged. We are the answer to the prayers of others who plead for justice, to the prayers of people in our own communities who have fled violence and physical abuse.

This week our Gaelic choir competed at the National Mòd and we sang a song written for us by Lisa MacDonald from Achiltibuie. This is a song that relates to the experience of people living amongst us who have fled violence and physical abuse to find a new home in Coigach. The song is in Gaelic but I have a translation of some of the verses.

An Caraid

I am not a stranger but a friend,
I want to be joyful, lovingly free
among my soul's gentle neighbours.

My family received a warm welcome
when we came to kind Scotland.

We left our home, the place of our love,
with a suitcase full of hope
when the war came upon us.

When we see the world through the eyes of those who suffer and have to leave their homes, and who we can welcome as new neighbours, we get a glimpse of the reality of a hope that is firmly grounded in God's love.