SUNDAY link

26 July 2020
Seventh Sunday after Trinity

connecting faith and daily life

The shade of a tree

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Matthew 13:31-33. 44-52

If a flood was coming your way and you had to evacuate your house, what would you save? Some police forces recommend keeping a packed "grab bag" with useful stuff in it – torches, basic food, medicines, and so on, but few of us are that organised. So what would you grab? Photos? Documents? Jewellery? Your phone?

In today's Gospel reading Jesus explores the value of things. The kingdom of heaven, he says, often seems really small, but actually it is the most precious thing in the world. It is like a buried treasure for which it is worth sacrificing everything else. It is like a single pearl that a collector would give all their wealth to buy. It is like yeast in bread dough. It is hidden, almost invisible, and yet it is the very core of our existence, the essence of the universe.

We cannot put the kingdom of heaven in our grab bag. We do not need to, because it lives inside and all around us. We can look for its signs, and nurture them, until the tiny seed of the kingdom of heaven grows into the magnificent tree in whose shade we will sit and eat with our creator.

Give us wisdom, O Lord, to know where our true treasure lies, and there to set our hearts, that we may see the signs of your kingdom in the world and play our part in nurturing them, until the whole world acknowledges you as creator and king. Amen.

Christian writers and thinkers

part III – Benedicta Ward

by Caroline Hodgson

Benedicta Ward is a theologian and historian of early Christian spirituality. She is a Supernumerary Fellow at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, and a member of the Anglican religious community the Sisters of the Love of God.

Dr Ward's life and work show that she is drawn to eremitic life, with threads of silence and solitude running throughout. This, however, is not to be confused with insularity.

She has written extensively about Anselm of Canterbury and St Bede, and is particularly known for her research on the Desert Fathers. Her 2018 publication, *Give Love and Receive the Kingdom*, brings together the spirituality of Cuthbert, Bede and the Psalter, Anselm the monastic scholar, Julian of Norwich, twelfth-century hermits, medieval pilgrimage and seventeenth-century preachers. In her Introduction she refers to them as "a stream of ever-moving pilgrims going towards the life of heaven". She continues, providing a glimpse into her own fascination with early English Christianity: "We are all engaged in this pilgrimage with them, and there is refreshment in such companionship."

Summer holidays

by Andrew Lyon

I can remember as a small child seeing my Catholic friend wave to me from her window as I passed by en route to school one morning, holding my mum's hand. "Jill's not going in today," Mum explained. When I asked why, she said, matter-of-factly, "It's a holy day."

I was instantly fascinated and quizzed my poor Methodist mother unceasingly until she was released at the school gate, pending further enquiries. Being the piously inclined child I seemingly was, that us "Protestants" clearly weren't joining in with something that had about it a tangible sense of the sacred, saddened me. I wanted in.

"Holy day" is where we get "holiday" from, and so all holidays are special, not just because we're away from work for a bit. Holidays are sabbath writ large. Let's relax, but let's also use the time to think more about our faith and pray. Or I'll see you after school.

> **He left His Father's throne above, / So free, so infinite His grace; / Emptied Himself of all but love, / And bled for Adam's helpless race; / 'Tis mercy all, immense and free; / For, O my God, it found out me.**
>
> **Charles Wesley (1707-1788), leader of the Methodist movement and hymn writer**

redemptorist publications **Sunday Link**. Edited by Caroline Hodgson. Copyright © Redemptorist Publications, Chawton, Hampshire GU34 3HQ, A registered charity limited by guarantee. Registered England 03261721. www.rpbooks.co.uk

Find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/yoursundaylink

fsc logo