

SERMON FOR TRINITY SUNDAY | 16.06.2019

Psalms 8; St John 16: 12-15 Delivered at the 10am Eucharist, SS Peter and John, Rugby

Can I start by saying how delighted I am to be here with you today as part of the celebration of Ken's 50 years as a Reader. My delight is only slightly tempered by the fact that it is Trinity Sunday and he has asked me to preach! But this is his day and we can forgive him anything! What is so good is that lots of you have come to give thanks to God for his work over all these years too and it is good for me to be able to identify some very familiar faces...

Those of you who still remember me won't be at all surprised that I am going to start with some photographs! Wherever I have been serving I have had a camera with me – thankfully better ones as the years have gone on – but I raided the photographic album on Thursday and hope that David Wakeling will be kind enough to reveal what I found from his desk by the organ:

- P1-3 Nave altar: we were well ahead of the curve a quarter of a century ago! Folk Masses with guitars once a month and a central altar. Compiled our own supplementary hymn book 'Thanks and Praise' with original writing in it. Collins family, Daisy and Henry Smith, Stuart and Peter Stanton, Dave Williams (guitar) Irene Cashmore, Ken and June Timson, Geoff Martindale, Harold Ayscough, Maria, Linda Wakeling, Marjorie Wright, Peter Lock, Sue Austin...**
- P4 Parish Trip to Oxford Bill and Wendy Read, Philip Young, Jegars, Richard Mortimore, Stephen Hetherington, Sheila Patrick, Lesley Creyton with James and Sophie Bedford, Edith Ingram, Christine Lock...**
- P5 The Arena group Mums Steph Jordan, Liz McGee, Angie Blain..**
- P6 A fund raising event with bikes Linda, Sheila, Edith and Geoff**
- P7 Early Quest group at Southam Youth Centre Gail, Sophie Philip, Maria, Chris, Robert, Carol, Jane...**
- P8 Quest wedding: Alex and Lucy. Sinead as a bridesmaid**
- P9 Quest on a weekend trip to Walsingham in Norfolk by minibus 'Bakey beany' and video. Met by Jegars in the Shrine**
- P9a The Choir in 1992 Roy Young, Les, Ken, Olga Howes**
- P10 The merger of St Peter's and St John's New foundation stone**
- P11 Closure of St John's Gill Nelson in tears, Bishops of Worcester and Coventry**
- P12 Merger: The great procession up Cambridge Street behind the Salvation Army band**

- P13** Merger: the Rededication Service: banner made by Arena families, Philip and Anita Ash of St Philip's far left; Sheila and Eric Phillips on the balcony (donors of shamrock from Knock)
- P14** Merger: Eucharist with Bishop Simon. Packed choir stalls with clergy and ecumenical partners.
- P15** Rugby Team Ministry: some of the 15 team staff in Wales – David Charles Edwards, Hilary Ison, Peter Beresford, David Gould, Patricia Martindale, Peter Wilson, Michael Langrish (Bishop of Birkenhead and then Exeter) – and a very much younger me. And with arguments all the way!
- P16** Hilary and husband David Ison, now Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London
- P17** Portraits from 30 years ago: Gerald King
- P18** Portraits from 30 years ago: Peter Lock
- P19** Portraits from 30 years ago: Geoff Martindale on a Young families outing to a farm
- P20** Portraits from 30 years ago: Ken Timson

Well, it took a long time to get round to Ken Timson - but we got there in the end! But that is actually the point. Today's celebration – of a humble, Christ-focused servant of the Church who has carried out the work of a Reader for an amazing half century – is not actually about Ken as such at all. Like all Christian discipleship it is about the way he has allowed the Holy Spirit to enable him to build up the Church – alongside, and in friendship with - scores and scores of other people.

So as I look back with you to events 25years and more ago I ask the question: where are all those people now? Clearly the Church was a very different place from where it is today – here and in every parish in the UK! We are all involved in working in a materialist, postmodern society where the Church and its Gospel is deemed to be largely irrelevant. We are all used to being 'used' for events like Christenings and funerals – and the odd wedding. We all have to find ways of making our buildings speak to the wider community – whether through your vegetable patch or through having toilets and kitchens which aren't an embarrassment! We are all struggling to find ways of using language and music which are both of this world and not of this world. We are always changing – and always will be.

But, however important our building projects seem to us (and we are doing exactly the same in St James' in Islington) and however we cope with the fund-raising and time demands that squeeze out so much else, they are really only a means to an end. What we are really about, what we are really offering, are those Christ-like qualities of love, patience, joy and hope – the gifts of the Spirit encapsulated in our friendships 'rooted and modelled on Christ'.

And that happens as much out in the world as it does in these sacred spaces. I can't imagine how many hospital services Ken has taken, or how many home communions; how many times the Church and/or faith matters have cropped up in conversations on remote Welsh railway platforms when the steam was in - or at Lodge meetings?

Throughout this period of the church's year we are reading the Book of Acts. It is all about the ups and downs of St Paul's missionary journeys of course but it is so much more than that: it is the closest we get to the biographies of the great figures of the Early Church: the arrogance of Saul and his conversion to the apostle Paul; the relief of Peter released from a stinking prison, the fortitude of Stephen at his martyrdom, the conversion of Lydia by the river bank in Macedonia, the tears of the congregation in Ephesus and the extraordinary prophecy of Agabus when Paul is on his final journey to Rome. In Chapter 16 of Romans we get even more names of people who Paul was very fond of and who were clearly in his prayers for various reasons: Priscilla, Aquilla, Epenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Apelles, Aristobulus, Heripodion, Narcissus, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis, Refus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philogus, Julia, Nereus and his sister and finally Olympas...

And what today's Trinity Sunday is pointing out is to underline the same intention in the mind of God: that the dynamic between God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is also the way it is to be for us: *look at these Christians, how they love one another!* Look how, when Readers' ministry is at its most powerful, we see how preaching and living the Christian life is about affirming the different gifts that we all have, different values, different personalities, different political and personal preferences of every sort: and yet we are able to love one another at the deepest and most profound level.

All that the Father has is mine, Jesus says in today's Gospel. For this reason I said I would take what is mine and declare it to you. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

But we can't just speak the truth unless that truth is clearly working inside us. We can't share what we don't have. Unless we are deeply committed to one another, are willing to take time with each other and remember each other's stories, nothing we do to this building, nothing we say in Messy Church or in a PCC meeting will be of the least bit of use. It is the quality of our friendships that make all those words come alive.

A friendship that lasts; a friendship that has real integrity about it; and a friendship that overlooks the outer manifestations of how we worship. One of the extraordinary things about the Church of England is the way in which all of us – from our very different Churchmanships - can still be bound together in unity. To be honest, the way your worship has evolved here over the last twenty-five years is not where I am happiest. But so what! We are part of one Church and Anglicanism has always thrived in friendships that transcend mere words and rituals.

As we give thanks for Ken's wonderful 50 years of ministry, for his ability to go with the flow in each generation, we thank God for the gift of the Trinity who shows us wonderfully how supporting each other in our journeys of faith has been key to it all, journeys that only flourish when they are done alongside each other in love and commitment to our essential unity as friends of Jesus.

In the words of Psalm 8: *Lord, how wonderful is your name in all the earth; even from the lips of children and infants your praise is to be heard in all the earth.*

Let me finish with this wonderful little poem by Benjamin Zephania. It is called People need people:

**People need people
To walk to, to talk to,
To cry and rely on.
People will always need people
To love and to miss,
To hug and to kiss.**

**It is useful to have other people
To whom to moan
If you're all alone.
It's so hard too share
When no one is there.
There's not much to do
When there's no one but you.**

**People will always need people
To please, to tease
To put you at ease.
People will always need people
To make life appealing
And give life some meaning.
It's useful to have other people.
If you need a change
To whom will you turn?
If you need a lesson
From whom will you learn?
If you need to play
You'll know why I say
People will always need people
As girlfriends
As boyfriends
From Bombay to Ostend.
People will always need people
To have friendly fights with
to have friendly bites with.
It's useful to have other people.**

**People live in families
Gangs, posses and packs.
It seems we need company
Before we relax.
So stop making enemies
And let's face the facts.
People will always need people.
Yes.
People will always need people.**

**May Ken's ministry – and all your friendship here in Clifton Road - be
rooted in God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**