

# End the Week with CME - June 13, 2008

13th Jun 2008

Welcome to End the Week with CME! This weekly email is sent automatically to Clergy and Readers in the diocese (if you don't want to receive it, please send an email to [CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org)) but anyone is welcome to subscribe to the list, and we are especially keen to pass it on to any interested lay people, especially those who may have responsibility for preaching. To subscribe they simply need to email [CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org).

## Coming Up

### Subverting the Empire: Romans Disarmed

*Blah . . . is a series of conversations on mission, worship, church and Christianity in today's rapidly changing culture.*

CMS have planned a 2008 'blah tour', and have invited Brian Walsh and Sylvia Keesmaat over from Canada to present it. "Romans Disarmed" will take place in Birmingham on Tuesday 17 June, 10am until 4pm at Birmingham Cathedral.

For more information, or to book online, go to [www.blahonline.net](http://www.blahonline.net).

### Warwick International Festival

There will be two guest speakers at St Mary's Warwick during the annual Warwick arts festival:

- Sunday 22 June at the 10.30am Choral Eucharist, the preacher will be Richard Harries, former Bishop of Oxford.
- Sunday 29 June at the 10.30am Choral Eucharist the preacher will be Ben Quash, Professor of Christianity & the Arts, King's College, London.

## Reader Fellowship Evening

Thursday 3 July, 7.30 - 9.30pm at Offa House.

The next Fellowship evening will be 'Music on a Summer Evening', lead by Mr Chris Farr, a first year Reader-in-Training. Chris was organist and choirmaster at his previous church of St John and St Philip in The Hague, and also a Professor of Harpsichord at Zwolle and The Hague Conservatoires. There will also be an opportunity to pray with, and for, each other.

If you wish to attend the evening please contact Chris Haines at [chris@haines.uk.com](mailto:chris@haines.uk.com) or on 01788 576279, so that Chris can inform Offa House of numbers for catering purposes.

## Ministry Where You Work?

Sunday 13 July 2008, 2 - 5pm at St John's Church Centre, Westwood Heath.

An invitation to all Readers, OLMs and NSMs in the Coventry Diocese. Come and discuss:

- Could you have a ministry at work?
- How might God be calling you to expand your ministry?
- An opportunity to explore possibilities beyond your parish role.

If you would like to attend, or find out more information, contact Felicity Smith (chair of the Coventry Ministers in Secular Employment group) on 01926 492452 or at [felicity@fandi.me.uk](mailto:felicity@fandi.me.uk).

## Unity in Diversity: celebrating the breadth of Reader Ministry

The Central Readers' Council National Conference will be held Friday 12 - Sunday 14 September 2008 at the University of North Wales, Bangor.

The keynote speaker will be Canon Dr Christina Baxter CBE, and the Principal of St Johns College, Nottingham will be leading an exploration of 1 Corinthians 12. There will also be a number of seminars, led by Readers who are involved in different aspects of ministry outside the church, such as prisons, hospices, bereavement, education etc.

A core part of the weekend will be worship and fellowship, and throughout the weekend there will be an exhibition of various resources relevant to Reader Ministry.

Cost: £170 per head if you book before 30 June / £180 per head for bookings after 30 June.

For more information, contact Heidi Cartledge at [hcartledge@fightingclose.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:hcartledge@fightingclose.freeserve.co.uk) or on 01926 641751. If you are planning to attend, or have already booked, please let Chris Haines (Warden of Readers) know at [chris@haines.uk.com](mailto:chris@haines.uk.com) or on 01788 576279.

[www.readers.cofe.anglican.org](http://www.readers.cofe.anglican.org)

## **Notes on the Gospel Readings for Trinity 5 (Sunday June 22, 2008) Matthew 10. 24-39**

### **Facing the Faith Crunch**

Increasing road tax to make us all more responsible about our use of cars was a good idea until the price of oil went up. Now the credit crunch makes most of us think the cost of becoming greener is too high and we'd like Mr Darling to do another U-turn, please.

Doing things differently is fine - unless it makes real demands on us. And that can be the problem with being a Christian. It's fine until we have to make a hard choice about how we behave, until we find ourselves faced with something we'd really like to do but know is wrong. Not so much credit crunch as faith crunch. Is the cost too high for us? As G.K.Chesterton sagely remarked in 1910, 'The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried' (What's Wrong with the World Pt 2, Ch.5 at <http://www.ccel.org/c/chesterton/wrongworld/wrongworld.txt>).

Matthew 10.24-39 is part of the block of teaching on mission which Matthew inserted into the flow of Mark's gospel, the second of five sermons which Jesus gives to his disciples. But how is Matthew 10.24-39 about mission? First, Jesus emphasises to the disciples that the way he is treated is the way they will be treated themselves. They should expect this: after all, the student is like the teacher and the slave like the master (10.24-25), so the treatment Jesus receives is what his disciples will suffer too. The messiah was expected to bring in a reign of peace and plenty, but Jesus' words here suggest that it would be a bit more complicated than that. First would come not peace, but a sword (10.34), and the task of mission in such a situation was to follow and represent the master, remaining faithful even when there might be strong temptations not to do so. They must remain aware of the wider perspective, fearing not present and temporary dangers, but the prospect of losing their eternal reward (10.28, 32-33). Yet, while reminding them of the judgement of God, Jesus also points to his grace and love, too: 'the hairs of your head are numbered' (easier to count for some of us than others!), 'you are worth more than many sparrows' - and even they are precious to the Father (10.30-31).

Perhaps most striking through this 'missionary discourse' in Matthew 10 is the fact that it 'practically never mentions the substance of what Jesus' disciples are to preach, but almost exclusively their behaviour and destiny' (U.Luz The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew CUP 1995, p.79). Mission is, for Matthew, the imitation of Christ. Incarnation matters more than proclamation in this understanding of the gospel, actions outweigh words. This is not to say, of course, that words do not matter: of course they do, or else why bother to write down the story of Jesus at all? But they must be backed by deeds, or they are worthless. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom would have been worth little without the healings that accompanied it, or his final assault on Jerusalem itself. Part of the story of Matthew's gospel is that God honours even apparently wasted actions just as he honoured the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross by raising him from the dead in the resurrection.

What has this to do with mission today, though, you might very well ask. The German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg offers the intriguing suggestion that Christian faith was never defeated as an intellectual system. This is an interesting riposte to people like Richard Dawkins, who strenuously oppose the idea that theology can have anything to say today. Pannenberg's take is that the problems with Christian faith really took root during the Reformation period, specifically the hundred years of war in mainland Europe ending in 1648, by which time Catholics and Protestants had fought themselves to a standstill. The Enlightenment grew from these roots, argues Pannenberg, with its stress on rationality and tolerance, and its fear of revealed faith and passionate commitment. At the other end of that era, as the post-Christian thought of the Enlightenment collapses as it fails to deliver the peace and plenty which science and technology once promised, Pannenberg sees a new opportunity for Christian faith. But, as Matthew's gospel stresses, it must be a lived faith, not simply an intellectual one. The Reformers (both Protestant and Catholics) lost sight of this essential truth, that it is not enough simply to be right. Being right must come with a winsome grace and integrity of life if it is to convince. As someone once said to me, many years ago, 'No one ever becomes a Christian just through losing an argument.'

Maybe we're back with climate change again. If caring for creation, as God does (10.29-30), is part of Christian faith, then what might the cost of discipleship be for us as oil prices rise? That's just once example, for showing Christ and imitating him in the world means marching to a different drum, with deeper fears than those of present comfort (10.28). To be true followers of Jesus means facing the faith-crunch when it comes, seeking, as T.S.Eliot put it,

A condition of complete simplicity

(Costing not less than everything)

becoming, ourselves, missionary signs of God's kingdom.

(For more on Pannenberg's views, see his article 'When Everything is Permitted' in the journal First Things (Feb 1998) at [http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id\\_article=3467](http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=3467))

## And Finally...

One day Mrs. Jones went to have a talk with her vicar. "I have a problem" she said, "my husband keeps falling asleep during your sermons. It's very embarrassing. What should I do?"

"I have an idea," said the vicar. "Take this hat pin with you. I will be able to tell when Mr. Jones is sleeping, and I will signal to you at specific times. When I signal, you give him a good poke in the leg."

In church the following Sunday, Mr. Jones dozed off. Noticing this, the vicar put his plan to work. "And who made the ultimate sacrifice for you?" he said, nodding to Mrs. Jones.

"Jesus!" Jones cried as his wife jabbed him in the leg with the hat pin.

"Yes, you are right, Mr. Jones," said the vicar. Soon, Mr. Jones nodded off again. Again, the vicar noticed. "Who is your redeemer?" he asked the congregation, motioning towards Mrs. Jones.

"God!" Mr. Jones cried out as he was stuck again with the hat pin.

"Right again," said the vicar, smiling. Before long, Mr. Jones again dozed off. However, this time the vicar did not notice. As he picked up the tempo of his sermon, he made a few motions that Mrs. Jones mistook as signals to bayonet her husband with the hat pin again.

The vicar asked, "And what did Eve say to Adam after she bore him his 99th son?"

Mrs. Jones poked her husband, who yelled, "You do that to me again and I'll punch your lights out!"

"Amen," replied the congregation.

**That's all folks!**

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