

## 20151025TwentySecondAfterPentecostSermon

Today we at St Paul's are celebrating Thanksgiving Sunday, a Sunday we set aside in order to give thanks to God for what God has done for us over the past year. Last year through thanksgiving envelopes we raised a goodly sum and because of that we decided to make it an annual event. At the Parish council meeting it was also decided that we needed to give you, if you would like to, the opportunity of sharing **why** you are thankful. Because of this I'm not preach a sermon but let those of you who would like to give your testimony of thanksgiving.

But you know clergy, they never miss an opportunity to preach! All I'm going to do is say to you that we chose this Sunday because the date in relationship to UCT Exams, we didn't check the reading to see how they express thankfulness to God. So the lessons you've just heard are those being used in all Anglican Church in this country this Sunday. But isn't marvellous how God words seem always to be an answer for us.

Look at that psalm we just said. The opening 4 verse are an expression of the nations thanks to God for God's rescue of the people: *When the Lord turned again the fortunes of Zion : then were we like people restored to life.* The life that the people of Zion showed, impressed the people of other nations to the extent that the other nations said: *'The Lord has done great things for them.'* And the people of Zion agreed: *Truly the Lord has done great things for us : and therefore we rejoiced.*

I am now going to invite those who would like to, to come forward and place their thanksgiving envelopes in the plate. I know of one family who are truly thankful to God for this parish church. I've asked their permission and so I'm going to share their story. Mary Japfta or Mary Smith as she was then, went to school here at the St Paul's School, she tells me she played the organ for the Coloured Sunday School. The organ was in the chamber behind me not the gallery as it is now. I wondered why she called it the Coloured Sunday School, but in my research I found that the Coloured children would come here for afternoon Sunday school while the white children went to St Thomas on Sunday afternoons. First point of thanksgiving I think, is how things concerning race have changed and hopefully are still changing positively. Fr Weatherstone married Mary to Dougie Japfta in this parish Church in the early 60s and their daughter Margarite was baptised here. I had the privilege of marrying her grandson, Randall and his wife Natasha and their child (Mary's Great-grandchild) Titan was baptised and today we will be baptising their next child Troy. In that family this parish has been a centre in their journey towards God and they are thankful.

On Tuesday I stood here watching the students peacefully negotiate the release of their fellow protesters being held in the Rondebosch Police Station. I looked back at this building and my heart swelled with pride that this building in its present shape has been here 160 years and must have seen so much. It has been a place of support, helpfulness, care and God's presence raised above the Main road like a light on a hill, as Jesus said. Finally for me I am thankful to God for being placed here as your rector, for those who have made my eleven years here so special and I'm thankful that God has given me good health and the desire to use my upcoming retirement in doing new and exciting things.

You are welcome now to come forward and place your thanksgiving gift in the plate. If wish to you may say why you are thankful, please feel free to share. If you do not wish to share just place the envelope in the plate and join psalmist by saying in your heart: *Truly the Lord has done great things for me : and therefore I rejoice.*

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Did you notice the dichotomy in this morning psalm? Verses 1-4 are a joyful expression of Thanksgiving but in vv5-7 the mood changes. What is happening here is that the people who return full of thankfulness find that living in the real world is not easy. In the real world there is drought and famine and poverty – notice the agricultural imaginary used by the Psalmist. And perhaps today so of you feel no thankfulness toward God because of your situation. You perhaps might be in a spiritual drought and feel you cannot come forward and place anything in the plate and certainly not say 'Thank You' to God. But notice how that Psalmist, in the midst of trouble, of drought and shortage is still aware of God's generosity to the nation. *Those that sow in tears : shall reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed : shall come again in gladness, bringing his sheaves with him.* Regardless of the tears we might face today or in the future God is with us and God will ensure our fruitfulness.