

6th Sunday after Pentecost

26/6/16

"The Cost of the Cross..."

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Many of you have been watching rather keenly the outplaying of the Brexit Saga over the last few days culminating in the shock resignation of the British Prime Minister, David Cameron.

For those of you unfamiliar with international British politics, Britain recently held a referendum to determine whether or not to stay part of the EU or European Union. The EU was founded on the 1st of November in 1993 and its main aim was the unification of Europe. It is commonly known as a politico-economic union and consists of 28 states, or rather, now 27!

The basic idea is that the states are independent but agree to trade under agreements made between the countries. The European Union operates a single market which allows free movement of goods, capital, services and people between member states.

So far so good...

But, over the last few years there has been a strong movement amongst certain British people to end the EU agreement and withdraw from the Union. At first, the movement seemed small and unlikely to gain much of a following. Over time, the statistics began to show something very different as a strong following developed calling for British Independence.

As you may be aware, the referendum was indeed completed last week and the results were in favour of Britain leaving the EU.

Many politicians, including the current Prime Minister, believed that staying in the EU would be the correct thing to do. Reasons suggested included:

- Approximately 3.5 million jobs are linked to being associated with the EU
- The EU buys over 50% of UK exports
- There is freedom to work and travel abroad
- The EU stands for equal pay and non-discrimination
- Extradition agreements
- Research funding

These are just some of the main factors that are beneficial to belonging to the EU.

So then, what are the predicted costs of not belonging to the EU?

- Many argue that belonging to the EU threatens British sovereignty
- The EU has too much Red Tape when it comes to trade agreements
- Whilst the EU may have been a good idea, it is suggested that the Euro is a disaster
- The EU allows too many immigrants

These are just some of the main factors that are beneficial to not belonging to the EU.

Many of you may be wondering why I am spending time espousing on current British politics?

Good question!

Today we read in the Gospel of Luke how Jesus addresses disciples regarding the cost of following Him. You see, my friends in Christ, just like many British citizens are about to find out, there is always a cost to everything we do in our lives. Nothing is for free, especially when we follow Jesus. There is a cost.

You might respond with the theological argument that salvation is free. I would respond by saying that you are indeed correct, but Jesus then also expects us to follow Him. This requires certain sacrifices on our behalf:

Let us explore these sacrifices for a moment:

Jesus died for our sins.

Through His suffering, death and resurrection we are set free from all evil and offered eternal life and reconciliation with God our Father in Heaven.

This gift is free... but it has a price!

As born again Christians we are called to:

- 1) Firstly, show spiritual discipline in our lives in everything that we do, from reading the Bible regularly, praying, fasting and worshipping. We cannot be “Sunday Christians” where we don our smart suit on a Sunday but spend the rest of the week ignoring Jesus. Spiritual discipline requires steadfastness, focus, routine, rigor and faithfulness. Being a Christian is not a “part-time” vocation that we can take seriously when we feel like it. There is a cost. The Cost of the Cross.
- 2) Secondly, we are called as Christians to remain part of the Christian Community. We cannot be Christians in isolation. We are expected to worship together within the Body of Christ. We carry each other through our ups and downs within the Body of Christ, fed by the Holy Spirit, buoyed up by the liturgy and embraced by our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Those of you who were able to attend the funeral yesterday of Lex Alport, I am sure were overwhelmed by the corporate celebration of his life and death. This is what real disciplined Christianity is all about. There is a cost. The Cost of the Cross.
- 3) Thirdly, we are expected as Christians at the foot of the Cross to engage with the world around us in a real and meaningful way. Anglicanism in history has perhaps focused on engaging with the dilemmas that the world faces. We are also called to help the poor, comfort the sick and visit the lonely. The Gospel is for everyone. The Gospel brings Good News for all and as Christians, Jesus expects us to witness and take His light to all. There is a cost. The Cost of the Cross.
- 4) Lastly, we are called as the faithful not to count the cost. Ever. For what we do, we do in love. Jesus died for us, not counting the enormous cost

upfront, but willingly obeying His Father and thus saving the world and us in the process. Similarly, as Christians, we are called to give freely, love abundantly, mission regularly, all without hesitation or anxiety. For this is true freedom in Christ: To give without receiving. There is a cost. The Cost of the Cross.

No one ever said that it would be easy to be a Christian. In my own life, being a Christian has cost me too...

I have sacrificed friends, including a few significant others who could just not relate to the depth of my love for the Lord and His calling on my life. I have sacrificed wealth. I have sacrificed the world in me.

All for Jesus.

There is a cost.

The Cost of the Cross.

The world largely focuses on itself and what people can take for themselves. Materialism, narcissism, greed and selfishness are often the order of the day.

As Christians we are called to live within the world but to stand up for Jesus. This requires strength of character and spirit.

As we stand together within the Body of Christ, embraced by the Holy Spirit, nothing can ever come between us as People of God and between us and the Cross.

I have no predictions for the future regarding the actual cost of the Brexit for Britain.

That is ultimately not my concern.

My concern is focussing on the Cross of Jesus and reminding myself daily of my responsibility in doing my best to meet the Cost of the Cross in my life.

I am reminded of a conclusion to a sermon I wrote for Palm Sunday back in 2013:

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Jesus: "Come and follow me..."

Us: "Sorry, I have no food and money for beggars today. Please go down the road to one of the charities who will assist you. Good day."

Are we so caught up in turning away the poor and lonely that we might miss Jesus?

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Jesus: "Come and follow me..."

Us: "Is that you Lord? I've been meaning to ask you what exactly is the difference between a teleological and a deontological approach to ethics?"

Are we so caught up in being theologically correct that we might miss the essence of Jesus?

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Jesus: "Come and follow me..."

Us: "Well, hello, Lord, what a lovely idea, but the truth is I just booked my car in for a service, I need to check my bank account and I have friends coming around for supper...maybe tomorrow?"

Are we so caught up in our own lives that we are unable to make space for Jesus?

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK

Jesus: "Come and follow me..."

Us: "Why, yes, Lord, of course."

What will your response be, to our Lord, when He comes knocking on your door?

May God bless you in the week to come as you spend time reflecting on how to continue honouring the Cost of the Cross in your life.

Amen.