



A sermon preached by The Very Reverend Simon Robinson, Dean of Truro on Sunday 31st of August 2025.

May my words, born of Scripture be inspired by the Holy Spirit draw us closer to our Lord Jesus Christ. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

On the night of 14th of November 1940 my grandfather, my father's father, Arthur Robinson, known as Jim for some reason, looked up into the sky. The air-raid sirens started blaring out at 7:10PM. My grandfather watched some 500 Luftwaffe aircraft fly overhead. He watched the first incendiary bombs drop onto the beautiful Medieval city of Coventry. Those incendiary bombs were followed by a wave of high-explosive bombs in what was to be some 11 hours of the most concentrated bombing of a UK city. About 41,500 homes were damaged or destroyed, over half of the housing stock in Coventry. Over the next few days the people of Coventry walked, they walked some twenty miles to Rugby, my hometown. They walked because their homes had been destroyed, basic amenities had been destroyed, churches and chapels and the cathedral had been destroyed. Many of the people of Coventry walked with nothing other than the clothes that they wore. The people of Rugby opened the front doors of their homes and welcomed Coventry's displaced and homeless and traumatised people into their homes. They welcomed refugees.

From the letter to the Hebrews this morning:

'Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers: for by doing that, some have entertained angels without knowing it.'

'Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have.'

Many years ago, I spent time in a Rwandan refugee camp in Zambia. I was there as a priest and as a teacher. I was there to learn about what had happened to these people. Their stories were horrific, devastating, and challenging. They were stateless, they were not allowed to work or earn money. They did not want to go back to Rwanda, even though the Rwandan Government wanted them back. Families devastated by the genocide. We worshipped, we talked, we laughed and we cried together. I spent time talking to a young man who had been training to be a doctor and was desperate to complete his education. He was not allowed to do so. He

simply wanted to care for his people. And then as evening settled, we came to the time to eat. We went to a makeshift building and as I walked in I clocked that there



was only two chairs, both draped in material, in front of them was a beer crate covered in a piece of carpet. The chairs were for me and my travelling companion. We were beckoned to sit down. To not do so would have been insulting and offensive. We sat. Our hosts then sat on the earth floor. We were served food and soft drinks on plates and in mugs. Our hosts had a shared enormous bowl of food. We ate first. Our hosts did not eat until we started. It was agony, agony in that these beautiful people, traumatised and desperate for a better life treated us like a king and queen. I learned more about humility and about being a servant during that meal than any theological treatise or essay or book or sermon could ever teach me. I was the honoured guest in and amongst a community of traumatised stateless refugees.

From the Gospel of Luke this morning:

‘Do not sit down at the place of honour.....go and sit at the lowest place.’

‘For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.’

In 2013 I stood in the Podrinje Bone Identification Project in Tuzla, north-eastern Bosnia a place where the relatives of those who had been murdered in the massacres and genocide of Bosnia searched for bits of their husbands, their brothers and their sons who been murdered and then dismembered and buried in various locations. This was a deliberate attempt to thwart identification of some 8,300 murdered Muslim boys and men and to ensure that grieving families could not bury their dead. There was a strong smell of stale death all around the building that emanated from the wrapped packets of human bones stacked up on shelves as if in some sort of bizarre supermarket. Next to me, on a surgeon’s table was a metal tray....on it, like a half completed jigsaw were a handful of small bones set out neatly. The more I looked, the more I realised that these were the bones of a small child, identified by significant advances in DNA...not all the bones were there.....because not all the bones of that small child had been found, he had been dismembered. I have never know a feeling of sickness like I experienced standing there in shock and despair at the evil cruelty meted out on a small boy.

From the book Ecclesiasticus:

‘The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord, the heart has withdrawn from its Maker.’



'The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers and enthrones the lowly in their place.'

Why do we make the scriptures so complicated?

- Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers
- Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have...
- Do not sit down at the place of honour.....go and sit at the lowest place.
- For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.
- The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord, the heart has withdrawn from its Maker.
- The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers and enthrones the lowly in their place.

These few verses seem clear to me. Challenging...well of course they are and clear in both meaning and expectation. The challenge for us a Christian community is not simply reading them or listening to them, rather it is living them.

In a world of division, hate, police states and riots, I suspect many of us feel that our hands are tied and do not know what to do, we may even feel 'why even bother, we have our homes, we have food on our plates, we have clothing, we can take holidays, why do we even have to bother.....can't we just ignore it and it will go away?'

Well no we can't! The reason we have to bother is because God expects it of us.....in whatever way we can, we are called to show hospitality to strangers, to do good, to share what we have, to fight our inner pride, to be truly humble recognising that the person opposite us has a story that they carry in their hearts and that they are worthy of love and kindness and compassion.

We bother because we must be concerned about the ever-widening divisions in our country and in the world. Divisions that are fuelled by power-hungry politicians leading to the erosion of community, the destruction of neighbourliness and the fracture of the global community of which we are all part.



Consider the treatment of refugees, consider what is happening in Gaza where 55000 of God's children's children have been murdered and still hostages on every side are not released, consider what is happening in Ukraine, consider the seemingly rise of a deranged dictatorship in the United States. We cannot ignore this. 'We are witnesses of these things.' 'We are witnesses of these things.'

I want to say this to you:

This is not what so many of you fought for when you were in active military service. This is not what those of you who are or have been teachers worked for teaching young enquiring minds. This is not what those of you who are doctors and nurses work long and tortuous hours for. This is not what those of you who are fathers, grandfathers want for your children. This is not what those of you who are mothers, grandmothers want for your families. This is not what I want for my life or anyone else's life.

This is not the way of Jesus Christ. This is not the way of the Cross, far from it.....this is the way of evil.

What are we to do?

We must stand strong in our discipleship. We must pray fervently for the deconstruction of corrupt regimes, for the toppling of dictators, for the removal of banners portraying Donald Trump as a Demi-God, for the release of all hostages on every side, for the repose of the souls of some 55,000 of God's children in Gaza, for the safety of some 300,000 Sudanese people who are being literally walled in in Ell Fashir in Sudan who will starve to death. We must pray for repentance in the hearts of every terrorist, every dictator and every oppressor, and as hard as it is and as much as it sticks in my throat to even think it, we must pray that the hearts of Putin, Trump and Netanyahu, that the hearts of the leaders of Hamas and Isis and Boko Haram change, are melted by God, that they repent and that they change their ways.

We must call out abusive, corrupt and oppressive power. We do this, not for any political party affiliation. We do this because we are Christians who are called to be better than this....we are called to be better than abuse, cruelty and division...we are called to be better than the war mongerers, the grand narcissists and those who crave personal power at the cost of human lives.



We are children of God, we are not weak.... we are strong in faith, we are not alone, the Lord Jesus Christ is with us and we will stand and call upon God to save all of God's beloved children.

James Arthur Baldwin, American writer and civil rights activist reputation as a voice for humane equality was established in his 1955 essay collection *Notes of Native Son* says this:

*'The children are always ours, every single one of them, all over the globe; and I am beginning to suspect that whoever is incapable of recognising this —may be incapable of morality.'*

The Rev Dr Jonathan Chapman, Pastor of Westfield Church in Killingly Connecticut says this:

*'On being a woke church: If loving our neighbour makes us woke, then we'll stay wide awake. If doing justice makes us woke, then we'll stay wide awake. If welcoming the stranger makes us woke; if feeding the hungry makes us woke; if proclaiming God is love makes us woke, then we'll stay wide awake.'*

*The opposite of 'woke' is not "conservative."  
The opposite of 'woke' is 'asleep.'*

*And God's people cannot afford to be asleep while our neighbours cry out for dignity, safety and love.'*

The children of Coventry welcomed into the homes of the people of Rugby, the children of Rwanda who sat on the floor whilst treating me as an honoured guest, the children of Bosnia massacred when neighbour turned against neighbour are no more or less children of God than you or I. The message of Jesus Christ is one of Love: love of God, love of our neighbour and love of the stranger who must become a friend. We are all refugees on a journey to our real, true and eternal home....at the foot of the great throne of Grace. The Christian gospel compels us to welcome the refugee who is in need, to feed the hungry child who is being deliberately starved and used as a political paw, to open the doors and the windows of our homes and our hearts to those who need a safe place to call home.

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- Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have...



- Do not sit down at the place of honour.....go and sit at the lowest place.
- For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.
- The beginning of human pride is to forsake the Lord, the heart has withdrawn from its Maker.
- The Lord overthrows the thrones of rulers and enthrone the lowly, the hungry, the needy and the refugee in their place.

Rachel Held Evans a Christian columnist and writer who died far too young, says this:

*'The apostles remembered what many modern Christians tend to forget—that what makes the gospel offensive isn't who it keeps out but who it lets in.'*

Amen