

All Saints. June 19th. Father's Day. 4th after Trinity

Introduction:

The world's most successful boxer, Muhammad Ali, died a fortnight ago. In a tribute to his life the 'I' newspaper printed a list of quotes. This one caught my eye:

Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.

Elijah feels all alone and afraid. He runs for his life and God encounters him. God speaks to Elijah and commissions him. He is to act with God's authority; and, by the way, you are not alone there are 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Nothing is impossible for God.

For almost nine centuries this church has proclaimed the Gospel; it has stood as a beacon of light and hope for Odell; and it has proclaimed that Jesus is Lord. But what does it mean to say "Jesus is Lord" and why should that be good news, light and hope for our communities. The healing of the demon possessed man at Gerasa is one of four events where Jesus displays his lordship.

Luke brings together four events in the ministry of Jesus, and paints for us a picture of who Jesus is. We read that Jesus calms a storm, exorcises a demon, heals a woman of her menstrual haemorrhage, and raises a child from death to life. We see that in these stories Jesus is revealed as Lord of the physical world, Lord of the spirit world, Lord of the world of disease, and Lord of the world of the dead. He is Lord of all. Nothing is impossible for God.

Luke 8:26-39

²⁶They sailed on to the country of the Gerasenes, directly opposite Galilee.

Jesus has entered Gentile territory, occupied by the Romans. These folk are not Jews - they keep pigs - alien territory.

²⁷As he stepped out onto land, a madman from town met him; he was a victim of demons. He hadn't worn clothes for a long time, nor lived at home; he lived in the cemetery. When he saw Jesus he screamed, fell before him, and bellowed, "What business do you have messing with me? You're Jesus, Son of the High God, but don't give me a hard time!" (The man said this because Jesus had started to order the unclean spirit out of him.) Time after time the demon threw the man into convulsions. He had been placed under constant guard and tied with chains and shackles, but crazed and driven wild by the demon, he would shatter the bonds.

To meet with someone like this is a frightening experience and we are happy when those who are deranged are locked away. We feel safe, but with Jesus -

he walks right up to this violent and disturbed man and commands that his demons leave him.

The demons know and fear, as James writes: You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder. James 2:19

³⁰ *Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”*

“Legion. My name is Legion,” he said, because many demons afflicted him. And they begged Jesus desperately not to order them to the bottomless pit.

³²⁻³³ *A large herd of pigs was browsing and rooting on a nearby hill. The demons begged Jesus to order them into the pigs. He gave the order. It was even worse for the pigs than for the man. Crazyed, they stampeded over a cliff into the lake and drowned.*

³⁴⁻³⁶ *Those tending the pigs, scared to death, bolted and told their story in town and country. People went out to see what had happened. They came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had been sent, sitting there at Jesus’ feet, wearing decent clothes and making sense. It was a holy moment, and for a short time they were more reverent than curious. Then those who had seen it happen told how the demoniac had been saved.*

³⁷⁻³⁹ *Later, a great many people from the Gerasene countryside got together and asked Jesus to leave—too much change, too fast, and they were scared. So Jesus got back in the boat and set off.*

Now you would think that the people of Gerasa would be overjoyed to have this miracle-working prophet in their town. But put yourself in their shoes. So your source of income has just been destroyed - driven into a lake and

drowned - is it any surprise that they ask Jesus to leave. He is simply too dangerous to have around.

³⁸The man whom he had delivered from the demons asked to go with him, but he sent him back, saying, "Go home and tell everything God did in you." So he went back and preached all over town everything Jesus had done in him.

The reality of life:

We watch our television screens, we read the newspapers, we reflect on our own lives and those of our families, friends and neighbours, and we immediately realise that for most people, life is not a bed of roses. The true picture of your life and my life is of: doubts and certainty; joys and suffering; successes and failures; pleasures and pain. This is true of the Christian life; following Jesus, and giving our lives to him does not lead to a cosy cotton wool protected existence.

Much of the Gospel concerns the ministry of Jesus out on the road; from Galilee to Jerusalem; through the desert and the villages; with the ordinary people and their leaders; accepting the praise of the crowds together with their rejection and disbelief; hospitality and laughter and the cruel pain of crucifixion. In his three years of ministry he calls twelve disciples who will share his life, and who will learn about God's mission "on the job."

Jesus takes his disciples into places where they are forced to face the reality of life, and the reality of Jesus' mission to the world. They encounter the violence of

nature, the frightening experience of a demoniac, the constant concern of ill health, and the universal fear of dying.

They are frightened, annoyed, amazed, perplexed, and overjoyed.

Then the disciples are sent out on Christ's mission in the world.

But then we have to ask: How will we face the reality of the world in which we live?

We proclaim that Jesus is Lord and that nothing is impossible for God.

Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they've been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing.

Nothing is impossible with God.

Talking about wealth and getting into heaven, Jesus said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'

Mark 10:27

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

How do we overcome our problems?

The answer is that we need the presence of Jesus, sharing our lives and, dwelling with the church, his body. He is Lord over the natural world, Lord over the spiritual world, Lord over the world of sickness and suffering; and Lord of life and death. He is the Lord of the past and the present; he is able to bring good out of evil; with him, we can cope.

In our world we can be overwhelmed by the news, which seems to be a relentless account of doom and gloom – one dark cloud after another. There is violence on our streets and the unseen threat of terrorism. There is poverty, starvation and disease, which is leading to the deaths of many in the Developing World, especially amongst the children, who are the most vulnerable.

There are financial crises on the world stock markets; to say nothing of the continuing violence in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria, together with the suffering of the refugees from these countries and from Libya.

But the Gospel reminds us that Jesus is Lord, and in the Book of Revelation, John records what God revealed to him, that in the end God's purposes and promises will be fulfilled. This is our hope in God, who is creator and redeemer, and who will ultimately make all things new (Revelation 22:12-13).

This hope is a fact of the future.

Jesus is also light for our personal darkness; for those fears and doubts which overwhelm us from time to time.

Our relationships, family, children, elderly relatives, our health and physical abilities, our jobs and future prospects, our doubts and questions about the meaning of our lives and the separation that death will inevitably bring.

The Good News is that Jesus is Lord. It is living his way. Finding life in all the fullness that God has created. The freedom from fear that we find in Christ.

As the Queen celebrates her 90th birthday she still works over 40 hours a week. In 2002 in answer to the question of fulfilling such an arduous schedule she said:

I know just how much I rely on my faith to guide me through the good times and the bad. Each day is a new beginning. I know that the only way to live my life is to try to do what is right, to take the long view, to give my best in all that the day brings, and to put my trust in God ... I draw strength from the message of hope in the Christian gospel.

We are those who, in Jesus, have the power to overcome. We, his church, are sent out into the world as those who are able to cope with the troubles of life, in the power and presence of Jesus, who is Lord of all. Nothing is impossible for God.

Intercessions:

For the ministry of the Gospel in this parish, especially for those being interviewed this week. May all who meet know the mind of Christ for his church

Nothing is impossible for God

We put our trust in Him.

For the forthcoming referendum. May all who speak avoid antagonistic remarks and bring clear facts to aid the understanding of the voters

Nothing is impossible for God

We put our trust in Him.

For Elizabeth our Queen as she begins her 91st year of life give her strength and wisdom and also for her husband the Duke of Edinburgh in his 96th year. We thank you for their faith and commitment to their royal duties

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For the places where violence brings fear and death. We pray for peace with justice and reconciliation with the admission of wrongs that suffering in the world may come to an end.

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For countries in Africa where climate change is resulting in failing harvests. We pray that the leaders of the richest economies might take action to limit the effects emissions which produce environmental destruction.

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For our family and friends, especially those who are sick or in hospital, those awaiting operations, and those who are worried about their future. Surround them with your love and reassure them in your presence.

Nothing is impossible for God

We put our trust in Him.

For fathers on this Fathers' Day. May all fathers have wisdom and compassion in their dealings with their families.

Nothing is impossible for God

We put our trust in Him.

For ourselves and for our future we commit ourselves to Christ and his purposes for our lives

Nothing is impossible for God

We put our trust in Him.

Hymns:

784 *Ye servants of God, your master* **CD 7 trk 19**

67 *Breathe on me, breath of God* **CD 2 trk 3**

367 *Jesus is Lord! Creation's voice* **CD 4 trk 4**

16 *All my hope on God is founded* **CD 1 trk 6**