

Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 3 March 2019 #EverydayFaith Sunday

Introduction – you may wish to read this at the beginning of the service to set the theme of the service.

Today is #EverydayFaith Sunday in the Diocese of Ely. By far the majority of people in the Church of England are lay people who spend most of their waking hours engaged in non-Church-related activities. Our challenge, therefore, is to support these people in the parts of their lives which are spent being active Christians in a wide range of contexts – at work, in education, in the family, or in the community.

Lectionary readings

*Depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on.*

Ex 34.29-end

Ps 99

2 Cor 3.12-4.2

Luke 9.28-36 [37-43a]

Alternative readings suggested by the writer of the homily as they may be more in keeping with the theme of #EverydayFaith Sunday – please get permission from your incumbent (or Rural Dean if in vacancy) before using these instead of the lectionary readings

Genesis 2:4b-9, 15

Ps 90

Acts 18.1-4

Matthew 25.14-30

Homily

Today's homily has been written by the Rev'd Dr Jenny Gage, priest in the Grunty Fen Group of Churches and formerly the Bishop of Ely's Adviser on Self-Supporting Ministry

What will you be doing this time tomorrow? Think about it for a moment or two, then turn to someone near you – possibly not people you know well – and talk to each other. What will you be doing this time tomorrow?

[Allow a few minutes for people to talk, then if appropriate ask two or three to share their conversation with the whole congregation]

Thank you for that. As for me, I shall be ... *[tell them briefly what you'll be doing this time tomorrow]*

It's easy to think that our Christian service is about what we do today, here in church. It's easy to think that God cares more about what goes on in church than about what happens the rest of the week. But that isn't true.

Listen to Rita's story. On Sundays, Rita helped on the coffee rota at her local church. She knew she was never going to take an active part in the service itself, but that was fine, she thought, because she could make sure that her refreshments encouraged people to chat with others before going home. She saw that as her service to God.

All the rest of the week, Rita worked in a hairdresser's. She loved her work. She saw when people came in looking tired and burdened, and she took special care to give them time to talk, while she attended to their hair. Some didn't want to talk, they just wanted a bit of peace and quiet, and that was fine by her too.

It made her happy to see people going out with their hair looking smart and freshly styled, but it made her even happier to see them going out with a smile on their faces, with the burden lifted for a while.

What do you think God values most about what Rita does? Serving coffee on a Sunday morning, or the care she gives to her clients Monday to Saturday?

Rita will probably never see herself as a minister, but when she listens to people, or gives them time to be quiet, she is ministering to them, just as surely as any vicar or pastor does.

But maybe you're thinking, that's all very well, but my work isn't like that.

Let's contrast Rita's story with Colin's.

Colin was a regular church-goer, keen to contribute to church life, so the vicar asked Colin if he'd consider being churchwarden. "Hmm", said Colin, "but would that mean I'd have to be confirmed?" "Well, yes," said the vicar, "aren't you? I always thought you must be ...". "No, my parents had me christened when I was a baby, but we weren't really a church-going family, so the opportunity wasn't there." "Well, no problem", responded the vicar, "It'll delay things a bit, but that's all. We can meet to talk it through, and then you can be confirmed at the cathedral the next time there's a service."

"I'll need to think about that" was all that Colin said.

Colin needed to think about it because he worked at a weapons research centre, and he knew that what he did contributed to making weapons that the company sold all round the world. He was in a real dilemma – on the one hand, he would love to be churchwarden, and to bring his gifts to the service of the church he had grown to love; on the other hand, his work wasn't really in keeping with his understanding of the gospel. But he couldn't just give up his job – he had a mortgage to pay, a family to support ...

[Pause, give people a moment to think about Colin's dilemma]

Rita is like the servant in the parable we heard in the gospel reading, who was given five talents and traded with them, doubling them to ten. Rita has a talent for doing people's hair, and she doubles her talent by making sure that they go out, not just with their hair looking better, but by helping them to unburden themselves or to find rest from the hassles of life.

But what about Colin? So far, Colin is like the servant who simply buried their talent, but he could be one of the other two. How? Not by giving up his job, but by looking for God in the weapons research centre. For make no mistake, God is at work in a weapons research centre just as surely as he's at work in a hairdresser's. It is going to make Colin uncomfortable, having to work in a place that feels at odds with his faith; it will probably make him even more uncomfortable to be open about his faith, and to tell people that he's thinking about confirmation. But God has never promised to make our lives comfortable!

So what about you? Do you see your service to God as about what you do here on Sunday mornings? Or perhaps at church-based meetings in the week? When you talked about what you'll be doing this time tomorrow, did you think that might be your service to God, the way that you serve him through serving other people? Or are you in a situation like Colin's, where it feels as if your work is at odds with your faith, and that there are questions you haven't wanted to face up to?

Let's pause again. Think again about what you'll be doing this time tomorrow, but this time, think about where God is at work there, and how you might be helping him.

[Give them a little time to think, don't be in too much of a hurry to move on]

I'm not going to ask you to talk about this now, but to keep it in mind and think about it during this next week. Just remember: God cares about what we do Monday to Saturday every bit as much as he cares about what we do in church.

Psalm 90 ends with the words "O Lord, prosper the work of our hands!" I think that makes a great prayer for us all – prosper the work of our hands. Whatever it is you'll be doing this time tomorrow, pray that God will prosper your work, and that in it you will be contributing to God's creation.

Whatever you'll be doing this time tomorrow, don't forget – your work matters to God. He needs you to do the work he's given you to do to the best of your ability, so that your five talents become ten, invested for him in his service.

Suggested intercessions

Loving God, we pray for your church – your body here on earth. Help us to be people who invest our talents through our service to you. Help us also to be people who appreciate all that others do, especially when it is unseen; we give thanks for *[name]* our cleaner¹, for

¹ Insert names as appropriate, and think about who in your congregation deserves to be included – the ideas here are meant to be suggestions only.

[name] who cleans out the gutters when they need it, for *[name]* who makes sure we have communion wafers and wine, and clean linen.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for your world, the world that you have created with your own hands to be a place of beauty and wonder. Today we pray that we may all see our daily work as part of our service to you, part of playing our part in your creation.

We pray especially for all whose work is difficult or dangerous, or who find it difficult to see where you are at work in it. Help us all to look for you, working alongside us in our co-workers; help us all to be people through whom others can experience your love and care.

We pray too for all who are unemployed, that they will find ways to keep their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for our community, especially ... *[insert people who care for the locality – think about areas that wouldn't normally make it into church intercessions, maybe the people who clean the public toilets, or the street cleaners, or the people who mend the street lights, or make sure the drains are working ...]*.

We pray too for those in our community who are homeless, those we see on the streets, and the hidden homeless – sleeping on friends' sofas, perhaps, or sharing a too small house between too many people.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for all who are sick or struggling with too great a burden. We pray especially for ... *[names of those for whom you are praying specifically]*. Be with them all to comfort them in their need, and to strengthen them for the week to come.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for all who are near the end of life, and especially for any who will die today. Be very close to them in these last hours. We pray in particular for ... *[insert names of those who are dying, or who have just died]* and for their families and friends. Be with all who mourn; help them in their grief and loss.

Lord, in your mercy

Hear our prayer

Finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves, that you will go with us tomorrow and in all our days to come. Help us always to know that you are with us, and that you need us to work with you.

O Lord, prosper the work of our hands, prosper the work of our hands.

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.**
Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Opening hymn:

- All people that on earth do dwell
- King of glory, king of peace
- New every morning is the love

After the sermon/offertory:

- All that I am, all that I do
- Angel voices ever singing
- Blest are you, Lord of creation
- Father, hear the prayer we offer
- Father, I place into your hands
- Fill thou my life, O Lord my God
- For the fruits of his creation
- Lord of all hopefulness
- Strengthen for service, Lord

For children/all age:

- Jesus' hands were kind hands

Final hymn:

- All my hope on God is founded
- Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go
- God is working his purpose out
- Let all the world in every corner sing
- Lord, for the years
- Now thank we all our God