

# Holy Trinity & St Peter South Wimbledon Sermons

## The big question (Ephesians 4:1-16, John 6: 24-25)

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Every day when I get onto the tube, because I am a creature of habit and know where it is best for me to be when I want to change trains, I stand opposite the same poster. You might have seen it. It says 'Ask the big question in life'. What it makes me do is wonder what the big question in my life is? I am not altogether sure that I know the answer to that, maybe it's what should I do next in life? Where does God want me? How can I make sure that my children are brought up as well as possible? What ever the question I decide is the big one for me, of one thing I can be sure, I won't find the answer to it at the London South Bank University. (Which – for those of you who have not seen it is what the advert is for.)

Then I have been reflecting that at the end of tomorrow I am on leave for just a day short of three weeks. Only two weeks away, but a few extra days to prepare. I am so looking forward to it. But, when I considered the reality of spending two weeks in the same room as the three other members of my immediate family, I wasn't quite so sure. The possible tensions that will arise are, as I am sure that any of you who have ever contemplated something like this will know, a bit mind blowing.

Why do I worry you with these musings? Well, because to me they speak of something that is very present in both the readings today. For, in our Gospel reading the hunger about which Jesus is trying to teach people is not a physical one – you all know that of course, but it seems worth reminding you – but a spiritual and metaphysical one. The picture that accompanies the advert for the South Bank University is of the Thinker. You know what I mean, the man who sits with his knuckles to his forehead thinking about what is going on. But, what this story from the Gospel can tell us is that, no matter how hard we think and try the only thing that will actually fill the ache within us is a clear and real knowledge of God.

This we can know too from the passage from Ephesians. In this Paul talks to the church at Ephesus about the way in which they should live with each other. There are lots of really important things in this passage about the gifts of the Spirit – that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, some should equip the saints for the work of ministry, etc etc. But, for me standing on the platform and thinking about going on holiday the other day, one of the most important parts of this passage was in the way that it helped me to think about how to survive the next two weeks.

Don't get me wrong. I love my family and really look forward to the opportunity to spend some time with them. But – you could hear it in my voice couldn't you? – it is sometimes a challenge to be with them full time. Paul begs the people in the church in Ephesus to lead a life worthy of the calling to which they have been called. He challenges them to live with humility, gentleness, patience; to bear with one another in love.

Now Paul was talking about much more earth shattering things than sharing a room for a few days. He was talking about holding the church together and not disagreeing too much over things. But, the principles are the same. We each need to think about how we live and respond to others in order that we might live lives which are good and holy.

That sounds pretty grand doesn't it, but I don't mean it to be so. For me, it's about bearing with how we each squeeze the toothpaste – or finding ways around it. It's about learning to share together so that we each get some of what we want whilst we are on holiday. It's about finding ways – day to day – to show each member of my family and those with whom I work (when I come back from my holiday) that I care about them and their welfare and want what is best for them.

Holidays, whether they are staycations – staying at home for your holiday because of the economic situation at present – or a chance to do something really exciting are wonderful times. They give us the chance to sit back and relax and think and pray and reflect. They give us time to build and re-build the relationships which are important in our lives. But, they can also be times of stress. Stress because of spending more time than we usually do with our nearest and dearest or stress because actually there is no-one with whom to spend our time.

As we move through August, whatever our plans, it will be good to spend some time reflecting on what the really big question might be for each of us. Then, it would be good, to think about how Jesus being the Bread of life who stops us from being hungry might help us to feel that we have some answers to that question. It might also be good at times to think about what it means to be humble, to bear with someone in love.

How we treat those around us and the way in which we live is the most telling thing about our faith. For without the life that we lead matching up to the faith that we have we will find it hard to share the Good News which is given to us to share.

I hope and pray that you will have a restful and enjoyable time in the next few weeks and in so doing that you will find the time and the space to reflect on some of those life important questions, be they big or small, so that you are more able to live as people who know that God loves them and that it is important to show that love to others.

Think of me in the next couple of weeks as I will think of you, and pray always for God to fill us with God's love so that we might live as those who have come to Jesus, and will never be hungry and believe in him and never be thirsty. Amen.