

## Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

### Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost – 14 October 2018

#### Additional material for Anti-Slavery Day 2018 – 18 October 2018

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## Introduction

Those who have been trafficked and enslaved are robbed of their humanity and are violated spiritually, physically and emotionally. Human trafficking is a type of slavery that transports or trades people for the purpose of exploitation. According to the United Nations, around 2.5 million people around the world are caught up in the web of human trafficking at any given time.

Human trafficking has an impact on people from many different backgrounds and people are trafficked for a variety of purposes. Men are often trafficked into hard labour jobs in agriculture or building sites, and can sometimes be deployed to pop-up car washes.

Children are trafficked into the textile industry, agriculture and fishing industries. Nail bars and cleaning companies will often use women who have been trafficked. Women and girls are typically trafficked into the commercial sex industry, and sometimes boys and men are too. One charity estimates that there are around three or four hundred 'brothels' in Edinburgh, with the number rising to one thousand during the Festival. Flats and Airbnb accommodation will often be used as temporary brothels for a short period before moving on.

Trafficked people are moved to where the demand is, and global trafficking patterns tend to flow from the east to the west, with many of the poorest and most unstable countries showing the highest incidence of trafficking. Extreme poverty in those countries is a common factor amongst trafficked victims. Where economic alternatives do not exist, vulnerable men, women and children are at greatest risk.

According to United Nations' figures, the most frequent 'sending countries' are Thailand, China, Nigeria, Albania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. In the UK, apart from Nigeria, most trafficked victims come from Eastern European countries.

It is estimated that every year the human trafficking industry generates around £26 billion. In Scotland campaigners claim that human trafficking is the second most profitable illegal activity after the drug trade. In the C19th a slave cost the equivalent of around £20K today, yet it is estimated that a modern day slave costs around £10. Organisations and charities

working in countering human trafficking and modern day slavery suggest that the economic challenges to industry are considerable and it is reckoned that 77% of the economic supply chain has an element of 'slavery' in it. There is a significant challenge to food and clothing suppliers as elements of modern day slavery are found at source. Serious questions are being asked about how much of the UK economy has a dependency on human trafficking and modern day slavery. Many will not want to hear the answer.

Most people in the United Kingdom assume slavery was abolished in 1833, but today's evidence is to the contrary in nearly every part of the world, including our own country. It is estimated that there are around 12,000 people in the UK living as slaves.

Government agencies, the Police and charities are overwhelmed by the rise in human trafficking and modern day slavery. The number of trafficking referrals to Police Scotland has steadily increased in recent years, with 2017 seeing a rise of 38%. The UK and Scottish Governments are currently reviewing existing legislation to tackle human trafficking and modern day slavery.

Helpful resources are listed at the end of this material.

### [Isaiah 61:1-4](#)

This great text, often associated with Advent, centres around the idea of salvation. God's Servant, a powerful figure in the writings of Isaiah, is someone who desires to be used by the Lord as an instrument of reconciliation and healing. God's Servant is the one who is called to pass this calling on to the rest of the community of faith. It is no surprise that Jesus appropriates this text at the launching of His teaching ministry, recorded in Luke's Gospel, where it is often described as the 'Nazareth Manifesto.'

These words speak of promise and reassurance with themes of justice, hope, anticipation and freedom. Whoever hears them hears God speaking directly into every situation of oppression and despair. Affliction, broken-heartedness, captivity and imprisonment come in many forms in our world today. The words certainly apply to those ensnared in human trafficking and modern day slavery. But they also apply to all of God's hurting children caught in addictions, dysfunctional relationships, dead-end jobs, unemployment and loneliness.

God seeks to bring transformation into people's lives. This passage begs questions of its readers as much as it does of those to whom we apply its meaning. How are we being

called to play our part in God's plan for the world? What transformation needs to take place in me?

Isaiah is not simply calling for personal transformation. Isaiah calls for global, systemic transformation. Individuals, situated within communities, organisations and countries are called to be part of God's transformation in politics, economics and social systems. What would this entail in relation to how we tackle the sins of human trafficking and modern day slavery? Isaiah calls us not simply to address future aspirations in the transformation of society to meet God's Kingdom standards; Isaiah calls us to address current and pressing needs, so that we, as far as we are able, not only show solidarity with the 'oppressed', 'broken-hearted', 'captive' and 'imprisoned', but do something to challenge and encourage politicians, local authorities, emergency organisations, charities, churches and businesses to address human trafficking and modern day slavery today.

## [Psalm 142](#)

This psalm is a cry from the heart. Attributed to David, it possibly refers to the cave of Adullam where David fled from Gath to find refuge and was alone for a time with none to care but his God. The psalm is a prayer for help. Like all prayers for help coming from those who feel invisible or voiceless, ignored or shut out, it begins with an appeal to be heard.

A consistent challenge to the faithful is to look out for those whose voices are being silenced. There are many in our society – Those who are present but not participating. Those who are contributing but being taken for granted. Those who choose to sit in the shadows, or are forced to sit in the shadows. Those who are excluded because of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, personality issues, ill health, poverty or social awkwardness.

The psalm could be referring to those who are shut up before a trial, or being shut up in a situation of exile. It could also refer to those shut up in emotional distress, or being shut up in fear of death. The ambiguity in the psalm allows for all, and further, interpretation. People are bound and shut up in many different ways. The need for freedom comes in many forms. The need to be noticed and affirmed in our noisy, fast-moving, blind eye turning world has never been greater.

In the time of dire need, the psalmist knows that whilst the world may be blind and deaf, God is not. Humans may fail, but God will not. God is the basis of all existence. When material things become worthless, or are lost, or are removed from us, God is our 'portion', the piece of hope that cannot be taken from us. We wait for God's help, and we work

towards God's help, holding on in faith. It is not easy, but God remains with us, in the darkest of times.

### [Galatians 3:23-29](#)

Commentators suggest that this passage from Paul's Letter to the Galatians is the climax of Paul's letter. Here we find the vision that drives and motivates Paul, alongside what some see as his frustration with those who deny it despite having been brought to faith in Jesus. Paul shouts the good news of faith as he sees it. When Christ calls the entire world to faith, all means all. While we see divisions and distinctions and things that mark us off from each other, Christ sees only sisters and brothers. Are we willing to stake our faith and our church membership on the manifesto Paul offers us in these verses from Galatians?

It is difficult for us to grapple with the truth that the gospel does not begin with us; it begins with Christ and His all-embracing welcome. There may be things that separate us on the surface, even beneath the surface, but it is as nothing to the power of Christ to reconcile all things and all people. Christ makes us one body; Christ weaves us together into one tapestry of believers; Christ shapes and selects us to make one glorious stained glass window of human faith, turning brokenness into wholeness.

As we look at the world, scarred in many ways, and with the particular scars of human trafficking and modern day slavery in mind, where is the Church, and where is the community, that lives out loud the vision Paul writes in his letter? We look for the reassurance of similarity, whereas Christ looks for the evidence of the Spirit's all-pervasive presence.

In his book, *What's Wrong with the World*, G K Chesterton wrote, 'The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting, it has been found difficult and left untried.'

All are children of God by trust, and by faith. In Christ a new people is formed. Neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but rather, one new people. None so broken they can't be mended. None so wicked they can't be forgiven. None so sick they can't be healed. None so lost they can't be found. None so unable to keep their promises that they can't be given another chance. None so unclean on the inside that they can't be purified. None so narrow-minded that they can't be enlightened. None so stuck in their ways that they can't be moved. None so hard-hearted that they can't be softened. None so invisible that they can't be seen. None so enslaved that they cannot be set free.

Christians are called to work under Christ for a world that brings that freedom and that human dignity to all God's children.

## [John 13:2-16](#)

When thinking about human trafficking and modern day slavery, we enter a difficult world where we come up close to issues relating to supply and demand, and to service. Not all supply and demand, and not all service is wrong or bad, but some is. In a world where we think we strive for equality, the more we strive the more we become aware of the uneven nature of things and the inequalities that continue to surround us. Life is still too often divided into 'them and us', 'haves and have nots'. We watch programmes like *Upstairs, Downstairs*, and *Downton Abbey*, and most assume that if we were transported back and time, we would be amongst the grand and the pampered, and not those slaving away unseen in the basements of history in dirty and sometimes dangerous situations.

And yet we all appreciate good service. We all like to be served well, in shops and restaurants, in the produce we buy readily in supermarkets, or the clothes we purchase to wear. The challenge is we never often think much about the people who serve us, or the people who provide us with the goods and merchandise we purchase to bring home. We have expectations in our society for things to be done, things to be provided, with little consideration about the back-story of the people involved who make our lifestyles possible. Not all might be human trafficked, or enslaved, but some might be.

Have we ever seen the hands of those who pick our fruit and vegetables, or make our clothes? Would we care about their living conditions, or their wages, or their quality of life? There are some questions to which we do not genuinely seek answers. How would we feel if the hands involved in providing for our needs were the hands of Jesus? Perhaps we ought to start thinking in that way.

Jesus is fairly consistent during his public ministry in challenging long-held social norms and mores. The passage from John where Jesus washes the feet of His disciples is an uneasy and uncomfortable one. It is the work of a servant, even a slave, but not, surely, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet there Jesus is found: half-naked, stripped for action, on His knees, at our feet, washing. How does that make us feel? Peter was appalled that he was a beneficiary of Christ's actions in this way, yet Jesus insisted. In the time of Jesus there would have been others, who would have washed the disciples' feet, but they are never mentioned; they are never noticed; they are never named; they are never helped.

We live in different times and first century social patterns are not the same in the twenty-first century. The point remains, however: who serves us? Do we notice and name them? Or are they hidden, and are they subject to abuses like human trafficking and modern day slavery? The foot-washing incident is only remarkable in John's Gospel because it is Jesus Who performs it. But what of the others? Jesus was not enslaved, He served willingly, and He chose to perform these actions to be of service to others. Questions arise about those in our time who do not serve because they choose but because they are afraid; who serve not because they are free to do as they will, but because they have been forced.

One of the challenges of a faith that sings about a Servant King, and that calls us to serve our sisters and brothers and follow in the example of Jesus, is that it should challenge us to look at all forms of service in our world, and realise that much is not done out of altruism and goodwill and genuine desire to make a difference; but out of poverty, bullying and even a threat to life.

Service, what it is and ought to be, and what it is not and should not be, is something the person of faith should think about more broadly. We are called to serve others; do we take time to think about those who are serving us, who they are, and where they come from?

## **Time with children**

Human trafficking and modern day slavery are concepts that will be recognised by children but, given the nature of some of the activities involved in this industry, may need to be treated with sensitivity given the ages of some of the children.

Make in advance a number of paper chains, with descriptions of the different kinds of modern day slavery that entrap people. Perhaps look at some of the many resources that can be found online that will give you the names of real people who have been the victims of modern day slavery and human trafficking, and write their names and their situations on the links of the chains. Some of the links can be made on the day of the service.

Get the young people to hold up the chains across the breadth of the sanctuary, or as far as they will reach, and say to the congregation, "This is what human trafficking looks like; this is how modern day slavery chains our world. Our role, where we can, is to break the chains." Then quietly help the children to break all the links in the chain.

If you have a cross in your sanctuary, it might be an idea to put the broken chains at the foot of the cross.

## Scripture Sentence

“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends.” *John 15:15*

## Prayers

### Collect for the Day

Suffering God,  
You stand beside the weak,  
The forgotten, the lonely, the abused.  
When they are beaten,  
You Yourself bleed with them.  
You call for a world of freedom and fairness,  
Where all Your children live in dignity and hope.  
Direct our frequently indifferent hearts  
To bring Your light into the dark places,  
Through Jesus Christ, the compassion of God.  
Amen

### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,  
As we bow low in wonder and awe,  
We see the distance  
Between where You are,  
And where we find ourselves.  
As we sing songs, say prayers and worship,  
We wonder how our thoughts and words  
Will ever reach to You in heaven.  
Yet through the love of Jesus,  
A bridge of faith is built,  
For all to journey on in trust;  
A bridge of hope is built,  
For all to journey on in confidence;  
A bridge of love is built,  
For all to journey on in devotion.  
We cannot hope to reach You by ourselves,  
Yet You, in mercy beyond words,  
Reach out, and down, and across

To where we are, and bridge the gap.  
Let us bless and praise You on this day.

Forgive us, gentle Judge,  
For what we are that brings You grief.  
For thoughts and words and actions  
Blotting days and nights  
With unkind deeds  
That jar the harmonies of heaven  
And darken the possibilities of earth.  
Forgive those times when we treat others  
As a little less than ourselves,  
A little less human, a little less important,  
A little less worthy, a little less relevant.  
Forgive our greediness and indifference  
That cause real hurt to those we know  
And those we will never know.

We seek Your mercy to change our ways,  
And with that transformation, change our world.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
Into Your outstretched, bruised and pierced hands  
We place our broken world.  
A world enslaved to selfish need.  
A world indifferent to the hurt of others.  
A world where casual cruelty is hidden but real.  
We pray for men, and women, and children  
Caught up in human trafficking.  
Torn from home,  
Afraid, alone, unhappy  
And heart and body sore.  
We pray for their homes so far away,  
With their own needs and hurts and worries.  
We pray for those who perpetrate this  
Cruel industry,

And for their broken, hardened hearts,  
That cause such pain,  
Yet no doubt masks a deeper pain and emptiness.  
We pray for the agencies of government, law and charity  
Who work to challenge this bitter reality,  
And seek to stem the tide  
That laps at every shore of modern life.  
We pray that churches, communities and individuals  
Will find the courage to speak out  
When wrongs are seen  
And concerns are raised.  
We pray for help to come to those enslaved,  
With freedom, peace and prospects for  
A brighter, better future.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Who taught us when we pray together to say:

**Our Father...**

**Amen**

### **Offertory Prayer**

Holy God,  
Our gifts we give to You,  
Part of ourselves, but part of Your far greater world.  
Help us to share, that others may not go without.  
Help us to give, that others mind find the blessings  
That they need.  
Help us to model in our gratitude  
The generosity of our gracious God.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Musical suggestions**

- CH4 1 – “How blest are those who do not stray”
- CH4 2 – “O righteous Lord Who set me right”
- CH4 6 – “God shall endure for aye”

- CH4 14 – “The Lord’s my Shepherd”
- CH4 99 – “Oh, hear my prayer, Lord”
- CH4 348 – “Praise the One Who breaks the darkness”
- CH4 352 – “O for a thousand tongues to sing”
- CH4 357 – “This is my will, my new command”
- CH4 374 – “From heaven You came, helpless babe”
- CH4 396 – “And can it be, that I should gain”
- CH4 468 – “Son of God, eternal Saviour”
- CH4 484 – “Great God, Your love has called us here”
- CH4 622 – “We sing a love that sets all people free”
- CH4 694 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you”
- CH4 710 – “‘I have a dream’, a man once said”

## Useful information and resources

### Key signs to look out for in victims of human trafficking and human slavery.

1. Those being kept as slaves might have their movements restricted. Victims are often dropped off and collected at unusual times to avoid being seen by the public, often in crowded minibuses with other workers. They will have little knowledge of the area where they work.
2. Victims will often look injured or malnourished. They will live in overcrowded accommodation.
3. Victims will have few belongings. Passports and ID will have been removed from them. Clothing will be dirty and unchanged for days and unsuitable for the weather or their work.
4. Victims will avoid eye contact and be reluctant to talk to strangers. They fear deportation, or threats of violence to them and their families.

**Who should I contact?** If you suspect someone, adult or child, may be a victim of human trafficking, please contact 999 in an emergency. Otherwise you can contact

- Police Scotland on 101
- Modern Slavery Helpline (confidential if you want) on 08000 121 700 or
- Contact Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit by email on [SCDNationalHumanTraffickingUnit@Scotland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:SCDNationalHumanTraffickingUnit@Scotland.pnn.police.uk).

**What support is available for victims in Scotland?** Support and assistance to potential and confirmed adult victims of trafficking is provided through two support organisations:

- Migrant Help (0141 884 7900 (daytime) 0141 212 8553 (out of hours) and
- TARA (0141 276 7724 (anytime). (*TARA provides support to women trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and Migrant Help provides support to all other adult victims.*)
- A new charity, Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHLTIS) is being launched in September 2018.

Child trafficking and exploitation is child abuse. Where a child is suspected of having been trafficked, care and support is provided through local authority social work services. Where a concern is raised, Police Scotland will make contact with the relevant local authority social work service but they can also be contacted directly.

The **Church of Scotland** has spoken out consistently and for many years about human trafficking and modern day slavery. Other resources on these topics are available on the Church of Scotland website, most notably:

[To be Silent is to be Unfaithful](#). This pack contains information, discussion topics and worship material that can help individuals and groups to understand and respond to the issues of 'Human Trafficking'. The pack was prepared jointly by the [Guild](#), the [World Mission Council](#) and the [Church and Society Council](#).

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