



Today we begin our loong journey through the Sundays after Pentecost. Twenty six Sundays actually, a time of growth as indicated by the liturgical colour Green.

We are growing in the Spirit; and for this task we need plenty of rich soil, water and sunshine as the gardeners among us will agree, however, we may need to change these garden nurturers somewhat in order to suit our spiritual growth, such as, reading the scriptures, communing with God and our fellow Christian brothers and sisters in Christ. We will sing praises to our God and all the other things that will enrich us and nurture our spiritual growth.

The disciples were about to engage in a huge learning curve, they had previously had Jesus right there with them and now, they must have been feeling lost and confused as the Messiah, the Son of God, was crucified, died and was buried...

However on the third day....and on this third day rests our Christian faith.

This story has been told and retold for centuries, and will continue to be told, the wonder of God's deep unconditional love for us, a love so amazing, so divine that He gave his only Son for our salvation. Somebody wrote a song about that I think !!

And all we have to do is say yes to the voice of God our Father.

It sounds so simple really and actually it is, if we will just listen through the humdrum of our daily lives, all the distractions that surround us and in those distractions we will find Jesus.

We will find him during encounters with our families, we may be babysitting, we may be offering our family support and encouragement through difficult times, perhaps times of financial hardship or maybe times of absolute joy, just being together in harmony and love.

Our families are indeed a gift and a blessing from God, and part of our calling is to show our unconditional love, devotion and care for our family; it is indeed God's work that we are carrying out, and carrying out in His name.

We will find God in the day to day activities that we routinely perform, for example cleaning our teeth, here we have a spare two or three minutes, our dentists say we should spend that

amount of time for our dental hygiene, and we don't have to think about cleaning our teeth, so have a chat with Jesus, he doesn't care if you have a mouth full of toothpaste !!

As we are out and about in our community use every opportunity to share God's love, at the supermarket, as volunteers, both at Southlakes here and out and about, at work or contact with our neighbours.

At the supermarket last week the young woman on the checkout was asking us how our day was going and as she placed the cat food in the bag, said, "So you have a cat?" and of course that generated a whole new conversation.

This leaves people with a heightened sense of well being and feeling good; it worked for us.

I have done this with people behind me when waiting at the checkout. Once I noticed a young woman with a huge trolley full of groceries etc.....

Pentecost heralds the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus as described in the Acts of the Apostles, it is indeed the birth of the Church.

Our readings today speak of living in the light of Jesus.

In the Gospel reading we see the authorities questioning Jesus regarding the sabbath, there were strict rules around what were acceptable activities on this day of rest.

Jesus authoritatively declares the Sabbath's true purpose, "the sabbath was made for human beings, not human beings for the Sabbath". And a final comment, "So the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath", He is Lord of all !!

Jesus has all authority on earth to declare sins forgiven just as he has divine authority to dispose over the sabbath.

As agent and instrument of the Kingdom now dawning, Jesus has authority as the Son of Man to institute the original plan of the creator for human beings and to challenge with authority, all structures, however venerable. An instant that began with a challenge concerning a fairly trivial infringement of the sabbath has ended with Jesus declaring God's ultimate will for humankind: enjoyment of an eternal sabbath "rest" in the kingdom.

Present Sabbath observance should not be a legal straightjacket but a joyful foretaste of that final outcome.

This bloke I know, Derek I think his name is, told me the story of his grandmother who would not allow anyone to cut their fingernails, and toenails, I would imagine, on Sunday, and no haircuts either. However she would prepare a huge roast lunch for the family on Sunday !!

I don't know whether it was superstition or the sabbath as a rest day as this same lady also covered mirrors when there was a thunderstorm.

How many times do we allow rules and regulations to govern our lives?

I acknowledge that we do need some rules and regulations, eg. road rules, imagine if we chose not to observe them, the roads would be chaotic.

As Jesus said regarding the Sabbath, we could also say that these rules are made for human beings, not human beings made for the rules. They are made to keep us safe and ensure safe travel, unfortunately it doesn't always work that way, but it is a good starting point.

Jesus didn't have a problem with the Sabbath, however he insisted that love and compassion should come before the requirements of the Sabbath.

We should also not allow rules to inhibit or distract us from our worship, we come together to praise God, to learn new truths from His Holy Word, to seek his forgiveness, to intercede for others and to meet at His Holy table with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Each one of us has our own unique style of worship, whatever we do, as long as we fully engage with God is alright by him I'm sure, as long as we regard him as Lord of the sabbath!!
Hallelujah

He is Lord indeed. Amen