

Sunday Message

23RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 10 September 2023 • Psalter Week 3

WHERE IS THE LOVE?

MATTHEW 18:15-20

Some years ago, hip-hop group, The Black Eyed Peas, released a single called "Where is the love?"

*People killin', people dyin'
Children hurt and you hear them cryin'
Can you practice what you preach?
Or would you turn the other cheek?
Father, Father, Father help us
Send some guidance from above
'Cause people got me, got me questionin'
'Where is the love?'*

It is a commentary on the hatred in our world, each verse ending with the question, "Where is the love?"

That song is 20 years old but it could have been written in any year of any decade. It's a question I ask when I see Putin's military invade a peaceful neighbour, and how overt racism is once again on the rise. A question I ask when I observe the vitriol that floods social media, and how religious zealots in countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia persecute young women and men seeking freedom and human rights. It's question I ask when I read that the rich are getting ever richer while more and more people have to turn to food banks to survive. Where is the love?

Look at St Paul's words in today's second reading: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. All the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not kill; You shall not steal; You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this single command, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments."

It's something Jesus says in a more practical way in today's Gospel. He reminds Christians that we must never turn a blind eye to anything that hurts another or is damaging to the community. To really love another means sometimes having to say and do difficult things. It means speaking candidly and honestly, even at the risk of losing the friendship. It means sometimes having to show tough love. How well do you love? ■



REFLECT

One of the heroes of World War II was an RAF pilot called Group Captain Leonard Cheshire. He took part in D-Day, receiving the Victoria Cross for bravery. After the war, he wanted to do something to make the world a better place.

Cheshire owned a country estate, and one day, in 1948, he was approached by a man called Arthur Dykes, who told him he had cancer and asked if he could park his caravan on Cheshire's property while he recovered. When Cheshire discovered that Arthur was terminally ill, he took him into his own house instead. Leonard Cheshire did his best for the dying man but felt inadequate when it came to caring for him. He had no nursing experience and wasn't great with soothing words either, so he fell back on the two things he knew he could offer: companionship and availability.

During those last weeks of Arthur's life, a deep bond of friendship developed between them. Arthur was in great pain and found the long nights most difficult of all. So Captain Cheshire slept on a mattress on the floor near Arthur's bed. He gave Arthur a little hand bell and told him never to hesitate to ring it should he need anything. Cheshire would always be on call.

How reassuring it must have been for this dying man to know he had a friend and companion to the very end.

Soon after Arthur's funeral, Leonard Cheshire read a book a friend sent him about the Catholic Church, and on Christmas Eve 1948, Cheshire became a Catholic.

Meanwhile, he began to take others into his house and to care for them. In early 1949, eight patients were staying at his house. Six months later, there were 28. And the numbers continued to grow.

In 1959 he married Sue Ryder, also a noted Catholic humanitarian, and they dedicated the rest of their lives to the care of others. By the time he died in 1992, Leonard Cheshire had left a string of homes dedicated to the sick and disabled.

Why did Group Captain Leonard Cheshire, a decorated war hero with the world at his feet, do what he did? The answer is love.

Listen again to St Paul: "Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments."

We might think we can't do much individually to create a more just and loving world. But that didn't put Leonard Cheshire off. His small act led to something wonderful, like a little seed that blossoms into a mighty tree. Where is the love? Here it is. It starts with you and me. ■

LEARN

As Christians, we have a responsibility for each other. We have a duty to point out each other's wrongdoing, and to do all we can to promote forgiveness and reconciliation.

True love hurts sometimes.

Love of neighbour is a mark of the Christian.

PRAY

It's not easy to gently challenge somebody or point out their faults. Pray for the strength to take the loving course of action in your dealings with others.

DO

How do you respond when arguments or disputes break out? Are you a peacemaker?

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right.
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-9

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows: 'Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. If I say to a wicked man: Wicked wretch, you are to die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, however, you do warn a wicked man to renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for his sin, but you yourself will have saved your life.'
The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 94

Response:

**O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your hearts.**

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before him, giving thanks,
with songs let us hail the Lord. (R.)

2. Come in; let us bow and bend low;
let us kneel before the God who made us:
for he is our God and we
the people who belong to his pasture,
the flock that is led by his hand. (R.)

3. O that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your fathers put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my
work.' (R.)

SECOND READING

Romans 13:8-10

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans.

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men, you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

**Alleluia, alleluia! Your word is truth, O Lord:
consecrate us in the truth. Alleluia!**

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

'I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

'I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**
**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.**

**For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.**

**I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace,
graciously grant that through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine
majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

**Like the deer that yearns for running
streams,
so, my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant that your faithful, O Lord,
whom you nourish and endow with life
through the food of your Word and heavenly
Sacrament,
may so benefit from your beloved Son's great
gifts
that we may merit an eternal share in his life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever
Amen.

Christ asks for a home in your soul, where he can be at rest with you, where he can talk easily to you, where you and he, alone together, can laugh and be silent and be delighted with one another.

Caryll Houselander