

## Sunday 16 August 2020 -Tenth Sunday after Trinity

It's said that there's a field in Gloucestershire marked by the ruts made by cars following their sat navs, ending up stuck in the mud, having to be pulled out by the local farmer. Never mind "Make a U turn when possible", it's evidence of people following commands having lost all sense of how to reach their destination. This is how it is for those who blindly follow instructions, forgetting that the purpose is to guide them towards a destination. The way to avoid "sat nav blindness" – which has resulted in widespread inability to read actual maps, or to make sense of the route we are on – is to keep a clear vision of the overall direction and goal of the journey.

It's the same with the laws of scripture. They are there as guidance in our lives with God, leading us towards the kingdom of justice, mercy and peace, and are not ends in themselves. When we find ourselves in a dead end, which doesn't look like the kingdom that Jesus describes, we need to backtrack and find the right route.

Immediately prior to the exchange in today's Gospel reading Jesus has been ministering in the region of Galilee, drawing crowds. We are told that Pharisees and scribes came from Jerusalem to challenge him for not honouring Jewish ritual purity traditions concerning eating, and that Jesus rebuffed them with a counter accusation that they served God outwardly but not with the heart.

Jesus calls the crowd back after the visitors have left, to further explain that it's what goes on inside us that determines whether we are serving God in our lives. He drives this home in the exchange with Peter, describing his accusers as "blind guides" who have completely missed the point of the Law, which is there to guide us in how to serve God.

A lot of people, myself included, found the closing of our places of worship during lockdown, quite difficult to accept. The point that I was missing, was that God's Sat Nav was recalculating and giving me an alternative route.

I started moving along the lockdown path by blindly clinging to my traditional patterns. This of course could so easily have taken me, like those drivers I mentioned before, into the field in Gloucestershire.

Our patterns and ways of worship changed, we discovered the Zoom Service, introduced to us brilliantly by Leisa and Colin, which resulted in me discovering that the experience in creating and presenting visual displays, that I had gained over my years of College lecturing, could be put to good use once more.

If we ensure that our primary ambition is to put our lives into God's hands, no matter how uncomfortable our footsteps seem, the detail becomes less important than the desire.

This Gospel reading leads us to open our eyes to see background, behaviour and belief in a new way.

The Pharisees' insistence on their tradition, has become more important to them than a living faith and indeed has closed the door to God's work in their lives.

So, let us pray for those who have become so trapped by their own practice of faith that they have lost sight of the One in whom they are called to trust.