

Trinity 10 sermon by Andrew 25 August 2019 Wake up your Jesus

Isaiah 58: 9-14; Hebrews 12: 18-29; Luke 13: 10-17

I haven't seen much at the Fringe this year, but I've been thinking about a one-man show I saw at St George's West in Shandwick Place a few years ago. It was called "Bigger than Jesus" and the Jesus of the show, who at various points became crazy Southern Baptist preacher, celebrant of a Catholic Mass, and steward on an Air Jesus flight to Jerusalem, took you on an anarchic roller-coaster ride through everything the Church has done to Jesus.

At one point, as preacher, he shouted at us: Now if y'all are thinking this is sermon time, y'all are right. And if y'all are thinking sermon time means nap time, y'all are wrong. Cuz in my Church, sermon time is WAKE-UP time! Y'all gotta wake your Jesus up!"

Now the show contained some language and ideas and humour that are probably not customary in the hallowed walls of St George's West, but I came away thinking, Yes – that is what Jesus was like: earthy and racy and dancing and funny, puncturing religious pretensions left and right and waking people up.

My crazy preacher said: "You gotta keep your Jesus awake. And how? By doing lots of livin'! Keep movin', don't get stuck in one place." The crippled woman in today's Gospel hasn't really been living for eighteen years – something has her in its grip. A disease, some sickness of the spirit, maybe other people's attitudes towards her.

The Pharisee is just as stuck, even more so maybe. He's a religious expert, but he knows nothing. And Jesus challenges him just so expertly with an image from everyone's daily life – don't you untie your donkey and take him to water on the Sabbath? How much more then for this child of God should I not untie her and lead her to the water of life?

Isaiah says it so beautifully: Remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil. Luke, our Gospel-writer, really gets this, because his Gospel is full of the very people who lived under the yoke, who knew what the pointing finger felt like. Luke, Paul's "beloved physician", has the heart of a healer – he wants what Jesus wants. He wants everyone to live and be whole, and that really means everyone. So Luke gives us smelly shepherds; the Good Samaritan; a marriage feast with a guest list of "the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame"; the prodigal son; Lazarus covered in sores; lots of women or children; ten lepers; and the good thief who, only in Luke, accompanies Jesus to Paradise. This entire Gospel is about removing the yoke.

And often that means the yoke of institutional religion. You can just hear the Pharisee saying, "Aye, but it's aye been this way. This is how we've always done it." But Jesus sweeps all that away and tells them it just won't do.

I'll never forget one experience I had of change in the Church and it was when the Church was turning itself inside out over the ordination of women. I hadn't had particularly strong feelings either way, but one night in our Cathedral, in the Lady Chapel, I was taking part in one of our healing services for people with AIDS. This was the late 80's and before some

of the drugs we have now, so people coming were very sick indeed, and the disease was taking a terrible toll.

Anyway, on this evening I was in the sanctuary with a Roman Catholic priest, a Church of Scotland minister, and an elderly deaconess from one of our Pisky churches, all of us available for anyone who might come forward. Up from the pews came a very sick young woman with her little boy, just an infant in her arms, both with full-blown AIDS. She made, without hesitation, for the deaconess. She wanted and needed the ministry and the tenderness of another woman, and as I watched her receive the touch and the prayers and the gentleness of my friend, I can remember thinking: The Spirit blows where it wills. This cannot be wrong. A whole Church *needs* a whole ministry. A world desperate for wholeness needs to see that any child of God regardless of gender or anything else can stand upright at the very heart of what we do so that all of us know that we really are welcome.

It is the mission of Jesus to set us free and he does it *through all of Luke's little ones*, and by breaking the rules – sometimes the rules of the Church, sometimes just our social conventions. Abbot Christopher Jamieson tells the story of seeing a little girl with learning disabilities getting on to a tube train in London with her Mum and Dad, and breaking that golden rule of the tube that nobody speaks to anyone.

Abbot Christopher writes: “There was enough room for her to move round the train, and as she did so she tugged at the sleeves of the strap-hanging commuters and said very loudly: Are you happy? I’m happy. Are you happy? Nobody was prepared to own up to being happy and some even ignored her, studiously burying themselves in their newspapers. I laughed and she laughed and her parents laughed, but somehow not many other people seemed able to appreciate that dropping the anonymous mask of the commuter might be freeing and fun. They remained ‘commuters’ and seemed to fear becoming humans alongside the vulnerable girl.” Definitely her Jesus was awake, and her Jesus was laughing.

For each one of us personally, waking up your Jesus will mean something different. But know this: your Jesus is calling you into life. There are no excuses for not coming to life’s banquet. Never mind what’s aye been, because we follow a Jesus who tears up the rule book before our eyes and says: “start again”, now. Shrug off the yoke, stop pointing the finger at yourself or anyone else, stand up straight and live.