

Sermon for Sunday 8 February 2026 at Holy Trinity Geneva at 10h30 – Second Sunday before Lent & Holy Baptism

Texts: Genesis 1.5, 1.26-2.3; Romans 8.18-25; Matthew 6.25-end

The Gift of Faith

I was rather surprised to find in my post box on Friday, a thank you card for some Christmas presents which I had delivered well before Christmas. Judging by the message in the card, I suspect it had been written shortly after Christmas and then either forgotten or subject to the vagaries of the English postal system before finally finding its way to Switzerland.

It reminded me that often we are tardy or even just forget to thank God for the gift of faith let alone reflect what that faith means for how we live our lives. However today at Holy Trinity we have six adults who have chosen to be baptised. Their stories of their different journeys of faith which has led them to make this decision, and also to be confirmed, are deeply moving.

Learning what they are experiencing is a wake-up call for us all. It's a wake-up call to stir us from complacency to think afresh why our Christian faith is a gift, what it is helping us to do and most importantly of all, how God is calling us to respond as disciples of Jesus Christ. So today I want us to look together to explore this gift of faith, as disciples of Jesus Christ.

In the forthcoming weeks, during Lent, we will look more deeply at what Christian discipleship means, how it involves us and how we are being asked by God to exercise it together as a community here at Holy Trinity. Today we are laying the foundations, looking at the very gift of Christian faith itself.

What does our Christian faith help us to do? The most important thing it does is to enable us to see both our lives and the world from a different and a far deeper perspective. When we ask deep questions about the purpose of our lives and of the world, particularly in the dark and difficult state it is in at present, our faith prompts us to glimpse life and what happens to us within the context of God's plans and purpose.

The theologian Alister McGrath gives a wonderful example of how this works in practice. He quotes the famous poem by the 17th poet George Herbert which we encounter in the hymn 'Teach me my God and King':

*'A man who looks on glass,
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
And then the heaven espy'*

McGrath makes the point that Herbert was writing in the early 17th century when two important inventions in lens (known as 'glasses' at that time), were transforming how humans were able to appreciate the natural world. One was the invention of the

microscope which enabled people to see intricate details, for example of the petal of a flower or a butterfly's wings, The other was the invention of the telescope which enabled people to see such things as the moons of Jupiter and the individual stars of the Milky Way – things which had always been there but had previously been outside the range of human vision. But the invention of the microscope and the telescope expanded people's vision, enabling them to see these new worlds

In the same way, our Christian faith opens up for us a deeper vision. It helps us, like the poet George Herbert, to look beyond the glass of our day-to-day perceptions to the reality of God's world, so that we begin to see things in a new way which makes sense of our existence and our purpose.

Our Christian faith also provides us with a compass to help us find our way in life. That compass is the person of Jesus Christ in whom our baptismal candidates this morning are going to pledge their trust and their commitment to follow him.

Jesus acts as a compass for us in two ways:

First because he helps us to get to know God. Because he is both fully God and fully human, Christ enables us to glimpse, within the limits of our human consciousness, the human face of God. Jesus made it quite clear to his disciples that if they had seen him, they had, in some sense, seen God the Father. The same is true for us. Through Jesus we are then able to build up a relationship of love and trust in God through our prayers.

Jesus is also a compass for us because he acts as a light to our feet to guide us, both in our own inner darkness of sin, confusion, doubts and sometimes, despair, and also the darkness of our world and daily lives which we must navigate, In the words of Psalm 119.105 *'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path'*.

Our Christian faith which has Christ as its very core, also points us beyond the constraints of our daily lives and routines to glimpse God's kingdom and to see the signs of it breaking into our world. Today our Bible readings have helped show us how this is so. In our first reading from Genesis, we heard part of the wonderful account of God's creation of the world and how God looked at His creation and saw that it was very good.

But we then heard in St Paul's Letter to the Christian community in Rome, the damage done both to us and to God's beautiful world through our own sin. St Paul's words may be seen as tragically prophetic, in the light of the damage which we have inflicted on the natural world through our selfishness and greed. Both we and the world which nourishes us are groaning in anguish because of what we have done.

However, Christ is pointing us to a future hope in which both we and the natural world will be redeemed and restored. As Christians we can live in hope because Christ has already carried out that work of reconciliation between us and God

through offering his life for us on the Cross. Now we, as Jesus' disciples, are being asked by Him to live in the hope of the future redemption of all things. We can do this both by witnessing to our hope, boldly and confidently, revealing our hope in Christ to others through the way we live out our faith in our daily lives. By this, we can, with God's grace, play our part in helping to bring in His kingdom. This is the kingdom for which Jesus urged his disciples in the gospel passage which we heard today, to strive.

Finally, our Christian faith enables us to cope with the realities of our world as it is with all the challenges and difficulties with which we often have to face. It's important to remember that Jesus never promised his disciples that they would be protected from the struggles, violence and cruelty of the world. Rather he told them that where he was, there his disciples would be also. With the exception of St John the Evangelist, all the apostles were to face martyrdom in his service. Nor did he promise them riches – a so-called prosperity gospel- rather he told them that those who were soft, rich clothing live in ivory places. But for them, simplicity and living lightly were to be the order of the day.

What Jesus *did* promise them is that they would never be alone. He would ask God the Father to send the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit would lead and guide them into all truth. That promise was faithfully fulfilled by God at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descend on all the apostles and Mary in tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit guided them throughout their earthly lives and was received by all on whom they laid their hands.

We also have received the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism and we pray that God will pour down his Holy Spirit on Manica, India, Emily, Merel, Helene and Daniel as they are baptised in a few minutes time.

A few final words to our Baptism candidates. We thank God who has led you to baptism today and for your families for the love and support they offer to you. Trust God who has led you to make this commitment for He is faithful and He is calling you in the path that leads to life as part the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which is the church. Whatever lies ahead, know that He is with you, sustaining you and those who love you, and guiding you by the Holy Spirit to discover His love for you and in turn helping you to show that love in your lives as his disciples.

And to all our congregation here today. please welcome these candidates, spend some time getting to know them at coffee after the service. Then in the weeks and months ahead, uphold them in your prayers and do all you can to help them grow and flourish as part of God's family here at Holy Trinity. May they also inspire us as we prepare for the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, to think of how we can inhabit our Christian faith more deeply as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Canon Daphne Green