

## Pentecost 4 C 2019

In *The Weight of Glory*, C. S. Lewis<sup>i</sup> says, “There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal ... Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

I had no particular idea why this quote grabbed me so much this week – but it did. It was not until I looked up the quote itself, to find its context, that I understood why.

We just heard Paul say: “Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ... You reap whatever you sow. ... So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.”

Before he ever gets to the “ordinary people” quote, Lewis writes: “It may be possible for each to think too much of (one’s) own potential glory hereafter; it is hardly possible for (one) to think too often or too deeply about that of (one’s) neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor’s glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken.”

Lewis goes on: “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare.

“All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.

It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no *ordinary* people. You have never talked to a mere mortal.”

Last Sunday, Nancy talked about the man outside church at the end of the service in need of food. Had we regarded him as Lewis says, no mere mortal – had we seen in him the possibility of the Divine – we would perhaps both have gone running to him.

The Scriptures tell us again and again that we are responsible for each other. From the time Cain first asks that question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” we *know* the answer. Why are we so slow to live what we really know at our core?

In Leviticus, God says, “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt.”

Jesus tells us that the great commandments are to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. And when he gives us just one final commandment, it is to love one another as he has loved us.

We do not hear, in our Lectionary cycle of readings, the story in the Luke’s Gospel of Jesus sending out the 12 apostles to preach and heal, much as he did the 70 disciples in our Gospel reading today. Commentators say the symbolism in sending out the 12 apostles is that they were sent to the 12 tribes of Israel – to the Jewish people. But in today’s gospel passage, the 70 are sent to “every town and place he intended to go.” 70 is the number of the “other nations” as given in Genesis. So the notion here is that these disciples are sent to the Gentile towns – to the “whole world,” in other words. And Jesus tells them that whether they are welcomed or not, the message they are to deliver, what they are to *communicate* is that the reign of God is near. The Divine is at hand.

And then I hear Lewis again: “All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations. It is in the light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics.”

All day long we are helping one another to recognize the reign of God at hand. All day long, we have the opportunity to recognize the reign of God in our midst. All day long, every day, we are to love one another as we have been loved, so as to make God's kingdom, God's reign, God's presence known.

And each day, each moment, we have the power to call forth from one another the best, to recognize and call forth and support Lewis's "possible gods and goddesses" – instead of treating one another as a "horror and a corruption." - All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or other of these destinations.

As so often happens, today's Collect gives us a prayer to hold onto:

"O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection."

May it be so.

[Isaiah 66:10-14](#)

[Psalm 66:1-8](#)

[Galatians 6:\(1-6\)7-16](#)

[Luke 10:1-11, 16-20](#)

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<sup>i</sup> Lewis, C. S. —*The Weight of Glory* (HarperOne, 2001), pp. 45-46.