



**THOUGHTS FOR SUNDAY  
SECOND BEFORE ADVENT  
15 NOVEMBER 2020**

*Have I done enough?*

I Thessalonians 5:1-11, Matthew 25:14-30

Watching the television news recently I was impressed to hear of the work of a local food bank, being run out of church premises, and the dedication of the volunteer helpers as they met ever-increasing demand. In the same broadcast there was an item about the pressure under which the Royal Derby Hospital had already come as the second spike in Covid-19 admissions hit them. The nurses and doctors interviewed admitted to their fears for the future, acknowledged their tiredness, but seemed resolute about their duty. That same day I had been enjoying the mildness of the day and was sweeping up fallen leaves in our drive, not for the first or last time this autumn. A neighbour passed by, out for his daily stroll. He admitted that he was now thoroughly bored, especially because he had had to retire, his business (engineering consultancy, I think) having evaporated before his eyes with the plague. I could not help but draw the contrast between the frenetic activity of the foodbank volunteers and the medics with the forced inactivity of our neighbour (and, if I am honest with myself, my own leisurely approach to life at the moment!).

Today's gospel reading always challenges me, with its implied question, 'Have I used to the full the skills and talents I have been given, or that I have acquired?' I suppose the answer is always bound to be, "No", there is always more that I could have done. At Remembrance-tide we often hear the words of S. Ignatius of Loyola:

*Teach us, good Lord,  
to serve you as you deserve,  
to give and not to count the cost,  
to fight and not to heed the wounds,  
to toil and not to seek for rest,  
to labour and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will.*

In this case, too, whilst I recognise it as an aspiration, as something some petitions of which I may have managed to achieve on a few, isolated occasions, I cannot with honesty say that my life is a model of this principle.

It is just as well for me, therefore, that to be a Christian does not require me to do 'everything', or even to 'do enough'. What it does require is for me to have faith in Jesus Christ and, in seeking to follow him, to develop a willingness to be led into situations of service and commitment to others that are not immediately congenial to my personal interests. If I do that, if we do that, we shall find that what seemed at first sight inimical to our own interests is, in fact, the source of true joy. Once embarked on this path we are 'the children of light and the children of the day' that S. Paul talks about in today's epistle reading. When the Lord comes, as surely he will, like a 'thief in the night', at a time we do not know and cannot predict, we shall find ourselves living with him, with nothing to fear.

Clive Lemmon