

So it's been another huge week in the politics of our nation with a new prime minister and cabinet. Listening to Andy Burnham on Monday I was struck with the values by which he says he will operate. He said this

'It's about putting the right values and the right standards at the heart of government.

I will put the care of people at the heart of everything I do.

I will give this my all, and I ask you all to pull with me.

Let's build a new national sense of unity, of common purpose and positivity.

Let us make this the moment when Britain starts to believe again.

The moment we bring back hope.'

With these values there later came some promises and some actions to eradicate rough sleeping. All going well and no mean feat and challenge and one which he had challenged in Greater Manchester where as mayor he brought together for the first time agencies including the Churches to achieve. Human nature such as it is and respecting people's choice is often difficult in this situation as some men and women sometimes choose this as a preferred way of life.

The readings for this Sunday invite us to think about what we truly value. They show the importance of wisdom, encouraging us to trust God's plan, and to value the kingdom of heaven above all else.

The Psalmist describes God's word as more important than the finest gold: it is true treasure, offering lasting wisdom, comfort and delight. St Paul in our Second Reading assures us that God already has a plan in place for all who love God. Even when life is difficult, God is guiding and shaping us to be like Jesus.

The Gospel also talks about choosing what is most important. Jesus tells two parables describing the value of the kingdom of heaven. We hear how coming across treasure brings someone great joy, while finding the one pearl of great price impels a merchant to buy and keep it.

For the third consecutive week we focus on parables from Matthew 13. Jesus is now addressing just the disciples, not the crowd. Each one tries to give us an idea of the kingdom of heaven, and each one to some extent also involves searching, finding, rejoicing and selling everything. Treasure hidden in a field . At a time when banks did not exist, it was common practice for people to bury part of their fortune in the hope of protecting it from thieves and brigands. In the Parable of the Talents, the third servant buries his talent. (Matthew 25: 18). Archaeological digs to this day still occasionally come across such hoards. The concept of treasure occurs several times in Matthew's Gospel: see 6: 19–21: 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth' or 19: 21: 'Sell what you own ... 'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also '. A merchant looking for fine pearls. Pearls had great value at the time and were sometimes worth more than gold. I was recently given this shell which had mother of pearl in it and is something I marvel at as part of God's creation. Please do come and take a look at it before you leave Church today. In both of these parables, the people take risks and sell all that they have to attain a greater reward. It could be seen as a way of describing the cost of discipleship. These parables move their location and trade to fishing: a setting familiar to the disciples. As in last week's Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, the kingdom of heaven includes 'every kind', good and bad. The reference to good fish and those that are 'no use' may also refer to Jewish strict dietary laws. In a similar way, the kingdom of heaven is a mixed body of saints and sinners. The final sorting out can be left to God and his angels at the end of time. Every scribe who becomes a disciple Some

Christian converts may have been scribes: indeed some see in this phrase a self-description of Matthew. Things both old and new The 'old' would be the Law and the Prophets; the 'new' the Gospels, Jesus's teachings. Both are equally needed, as the Gospels are the fulfilment of the Law.

I am curious with a new Government to see if the values by which they work and live by serve the common good as is promised and hold believing and belonging at the heart of all they do. Like Jesus I hope that Andy Burnhams message was to all those he holds close as ministers when he says

'I want to be honest with you. We have not been good enough, and we need to be better..... Many feel as though they're still in decline, and they don't have the ability to turn things around.

And that's why we will change politics, to make it more collaborative, more about problem solving than point scoring.'

There is no room for point scoring in Jesus' parables of the kingdom rather Jesus asks us to follow him and his values. Let us pray for this new elected Government and leader holding their values to account and this week, we pray to live each day with the wisdom to know what truly matters, and to let go of anything that holds us back. 'Lord, help us to share the joy of following you, wherever and however we can.' **Amen**