SERMON AND READINGS FOR THE ELECTION SYNOD EUCHARAIST AND FOR SERVICES AROUND THE BUNBURY DIOCESE 4/10/2026:
GEOFF CHADWICK

1 Sam16:4-13
4 Samuel did what the Lord commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?"
5 He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.
6 When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord."
7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."
8 Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."
9 Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one."
10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these."
11 Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here."
12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."
13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.
(1 Sam16:4-13, NRSV)

Psalm 133 (APBA)
1 Behold how good and how lovely it is:
when families live together in unity.

2 It is fragrant as oil upon the head,
that runs down over the beard:

fragrant as oil upon the beard of Aaron,
that ran down over the collar of his robe.

3 It is like a dew of Hermon:
like the dew that falls upon the hill of Zion.

4 For there the Lord has commanded his blessing:
which is life for evermore.

Titus 1:5-9
5 I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you:

6 someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious.
7 For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain;
8 but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled.
9 He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9, NRSV)

Mk 10:35-45
James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."
And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?"
And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."
But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"
They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized;
but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."
When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John.
So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.
But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,
and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.
For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."
(Mk 10:35-45, NRSV)

It’s good to remember that in New Testament times, society was highly stratified. Amongst the Jews there was a hierarchy of faithfulness. For example, Pharisees were considered more “religious” or learn-ed than common folk.

As far as Gentiles were concerned, there was a strict order of social classes ranging from slaves to Roman Citizens, and ultimately the emperor. If you were a member of the Roman Army, you would know your rank and would be very careful not to fall into the trap of insubordination.

Social standing was everything. It affected your income, your social interactions and your freedoms. It was important that you knew your place and did not stray from it.

So in today's Gospel reading, James and John are not doing anything unusual. They are trying to work out how the hierarchy will function within the fledgling band of Jesus' followers. They are trying to make sense of things through the common, everyday understanding of the world around them. They are looking for a rank, and once they know it, they will know how to behave. Even better, once they know everyone else's rank they will know how to treat them. They are seeking comfort and clarity based on the world's model of how things should be.

But, of course, Jesus challenges their thinking, and in doing so challenges the accepted hierarchical norm of the society around him. What he says is both radical and powerful. Our problem is that we have heard the words so often that we often forget this:

> *"You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them.*
> *But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,*
> *and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.*
> *For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many." (Mk 10:42-45, NRSV)*

Curiously, the early church chose to act-out these words with a living parable. Our forebears chose to reverse the order of Roman military processions by putting the least in church hierarchy first, and the highest ranked officials last. We continue to do this today in our official processions. The first shall indeed be last and the last shall be first. Believe it or not, this was a highly radical and highly symbolic act. Perhaps our modern minds have forgotten this as we gather in our processions. But the point is clear, in the church it is the servant and those with little power who are first in line.

At least that's how it should be!

In a world where everyone aspired to be king Jesus calls us to servanthood!

There's a wonderful story (perhaps apocryphal) about a bishop who attended the enquirers conference of a diocese. Would-be candidates for ordination were present for their interviews.

The bishop was dressed as one of the kitchen staff, helped served the meals and did the dishes. He learned much about each candidate away from the formality and good manners of the interviews! How they treated him, a lowly kitchen-hand, and how they spoke when bishops were supposedly not present, mattered!

Was this deceptive? Who knows but we can worry about the ethics of this another time. Even so, the situation makes a point about personal integrity. We can all ask ourselves if we are consistently authentic no matter whose company we are in.

I wonder if you noticed the curious inconsistency in the reading from *1Samuel*. The prophet is sent to examine all of Jesse's sons to see if one is a suitable candidate for king.

Eliab is the primary contender by virtue of his status as Jesse's first born. But in a radical move contrary to the common practice at the time, the Lord proclaims, through Samuel:

> *7 "... Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." (1 Sam 16:7, NRSV)*

Then, the youngest, who's not even considered worthy of an interview and has been left out in the fields tending the sheep, is summoned. It is David of course, and ironically, his outward appearance is described:

> *12 He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."*
> *(1Sam 16:12, NRSV)*

So maybe the outer appearance is some sort of an expression of inner goodness after all!

The *Bunbury Bishopric Election Synod* is meeting over this weekend. The *Nomination Committee* has already been at work reducing the number of candidates down to a manageable number, and the Synod members will be considering the character of each. This will not be an easy task, so we pray that each member will be given the gift of Godly discernment for their deliberations.

We must pray too, for the candidates who will be wondering if their life is about to change.

The bishop's role is best described in the *Ordinal* found in our *Prayer-book*:

> *A bishop is called to maintain the Church's witness*
> *to the resurrection of Christ from the dead,*
> *to protect the purity of the gospel,*
> *and to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord.*
> *As a chief minister and pastor in Christ's Church,*
> *you are to guard its faith, unity and discipline,*
> *and promote its mission in the world.*
> *You are to ensure that God's word is faithfully proclaimed,*
> *Christ's sacraments duly administered,*
> *and Christ's discipline applied justly, with mercy.*
> *You are to lead and guide the priests and deacons*
> *under your care,*
> *and be faithful in the choosing and ordaining of ministers.*
> *You are to watch over, protect and serve the people of God,*
> *to teach and govern them, and to be hospitable.*
> *You must, therefore, know and be known by them,*
> *and be a good example to all.*
> *These are the duties of a bishop, and they are weighty.* (*AAPB, 1995, p802)*

Weighty indeed!

Titus reminds us that even in New Testament times it was weighty:

> *7 For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain;*

8 but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled.
9 He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it. (Titus 1:5-9, NRSV)

This is no tall order and remains an ideal to which all bishops aspire.

So today, our Synod will be about the Lord's business. The task ahead of the members is not easy, yet we do pray that God's Spirit will be at work amidst all the deliberation, discussion and differences of opinion. We commend the Synod for its task as we continue to pray our Anglican prayer at the time of choosing a bishop:

Eternal God, shepherd and guide,
in your mercy give your Church in this diocese
a shepherd after your own heart
who will walk in your ways,
and with loving care watch over your people.
Give us a leader of vision and a teacher of your truth.
So may your Church be built up
and your name glorified;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(*An Australian Prayerbook*, 1995, p212)

Later today, may we be surprised by joy!

The Lord be with you.