

Nothing is impossible for God. We hear those words, and sometimes we tend to underestimate the power of those few words. Nothing is impossible for God. Nothing at all. But that doesn't mean that we can just sit back and hope for the best, or be content to live out our days of discipleship in a state of comfortable ease. If that were so, then we wouldn't face the issues we face as a congregation, parish, diocese and to a lesser extent church. What we need is a better understanding of what it means to be a part of that radical, culture shifting understanding of the world that is the Kingdom of heaven, and we need to remember that it is up to us to call upon God to help us!

A pondering I have from our reading from the letter to the Hebrews, is: "how often do we think of the word, as living and active?" Let me expand to ask how often do we treat our faith, and by extension our baptismal vocation to make disciples as living and active? After all, if we step out in faith, if our faith is active, and living, we know that there is nothing that can be hidden from God. On Pentecost Sunday, many years ago, I was struck by a dear friend and colleague of both mine and my wife's pointing out that the prayer of preparation that we pray each week reminds us of this very point: "and from whom no secrets are hidden." This is true for us. Nothing is hidden from God's sight. This means our fears, our insecurities, our doubts are all laid bare. But do you know what is also laid bare? Our hope, our longing for God's presence. Again, if we but ask, and trust, if we but step out in faith, we will be aware of that word, that wisdom of God that can separate bone from marrow, the spirit from the soul, death from the captive to sin...

Now we move to the gospel. How hard is it for the rich to enter the Kingdom! Jesus proclaims after the rich young man goes away depressed for he was told he had to step out in faith to be a true disciple. In fact, Jesus points out it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for those who have much in this world to enter the Kingdom. Yet, this in itself is not impossible for God. Mortals cannot gain the Kingdom themselves, it is only through acceptance of the call to be disciples and a willingness to carry your cross - no matter the cost - that will gain you the crown of life.

Of course, this doesn't mean it's easy. And the apostles are genuinely alarmed by Jesus' statement that nothing they can do in their own power will enable them to claim the crown, and in true Peter the man style (remembering this is before he is transformed by the power of the spirit into the St. Peter who we know and who's example we aim to follow) he blurts out "but we" (the disciples) "gave up everything to follow you! What about us?!" Jesus' reply to this outburst is solemn and terrifying: "you will gain a hundredfold what you've given up in this age."

Well that sounds alright you can almost hear the disciples thinking! But what comes next is what infomercials would call "the free set of steak knives", as Jesus continues "also persecutions, but in the age to come, eternal life." I'm not going to stand here and pretend that discipleship is an easy path, because it's not. To live as a disciple, to do what we are called to do is hard, and you know it. For me personally, the journey has taken me from my home in the Hunter Valley to South Australia, the Riverina district of NSW, and now to you folk here in Gisborne! The joke among many of my friends in ministry is that I'm Fr. Tumbleweed, as I'm always blowing around from place to place, such is my own journey of discipleship. If I were to go around and ask you all the troubles you've encountered in your own discipleship journey's, you'd have tales of hardship and sacrifice aplenty, but we journey on, confident in the promise of Eternal life.

The arrival of a new Vicar leads us to many opportunities that are in equal measure terrifying and exciting. After all, we'll inevitably see a few faces show up to see what the new broom is like, and weather or not we can see ourselves working together for God's glory in this place. For many, it will, I hope, be an opportunity for renewal and healing. I also hope it's an opportunity to renew our trust in God to lead us into the future in Faith, Hope, and Love.