



St Marylebone
Parish Church

**1.10 pm Holy Eucharist with prayers for healing
Wednesday in 21st Week OT 2021**

There's an awful lot to chew on in today's readings. After Holy Communion we will, as always, have a time of prayer for healing. Fran, who is training for the priesthood at the College of the Resurrection at Mirfield, West Yorkshire, and on placement with our friend Lydia in our local hospital chaplaincy will pray for those who are sick, especially the names of those who have asked for our prayers, in a moment. Healing is always at the heart of our worship and ministry at St Marylebone, and none more so than on a Wednesday lunchtime.

And today's readings offer us healing too, but of a different kind. The wounds addressed in today's readings are not physical, they are the wounds of cynicism, of mistrust and the wound of hypocrisy.

St Paul's words to the Thessalonians make it clear that mistrust or resentment do not belong to our body, the Body of Christ. He is at pains not to be a burden, and to ensure no resentment or strife creeps in. And today's first reading closes with the most important thing: that God's message was discerned with openness and integrity, not as some cynical human thinking or any other game. The wounds of cynicism and resentment or mistrust have no part in the Body of Christ. Therefore when they creep in (and they will – into our own hearts, our lives, our churches) we must gently but firmly show them the door.

And hypocrisy too. In today's snippet from St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is unequivocal. His words to the scribes and pharisees should bring us up sharp – don't think yourself better than others, don't imagine you're not making all the same mistakes. We hear echoing in our ears Jesus' words elsewhere – take the beam out of your own eye before the speck in your neighbour's (Mttw 7.5). The publican on his knees asking for mercy went away justified, the pharisee (right with the law and upright in all things) condemned himself by his lack of humility (Lk 18.9). If we think ourselves better than many (immune from the pharisee's sins, anyway) we are making *precisely* the mistake they made. Are we not also whitewashed sepulchres, also? More concerned with looking good and being *thought* good than actually *being* good? Lord heals us from these wounds with the balm of humility.

The wounds of cynicism and mistrust, of resentment and hypocrisy are ever-present. We will never succeed in becoming invulnerable to them. But, we are never without hope!

Today's psalm (139) holds the key. There is nowhere we can go, no depths we can sink to, no heights we can scramble to, in which God is not *already there*, waiting, patiently, lovingly, already knowing who we are and what we are about. He knows it all already, even the shameful depths we might hide (sometimes even from ourselves) and He still loves, and is there, in those dark places, ready to heal and make whole.

So, encouraged by St Paul, chastened lovingly by the Lord, inspired by the Psalmist's ancient wisdom, let's come to the Lord now and receive His life into our lives in Holy Communion and ask for His healing and wholeness to be found in us and all His beloved children.