

**Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time 2017**  
**Fr Nevsky Everett**

‘Nothing is covered that will not be revealed,  
or hidden that will not be known.’

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of  
the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

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We live by the north gate of the University  
Parks, at the top of Parks Road in what must be  
an old park-keepers lodge, half in the parks, and  
half on the street.

It means that my commute to Keble is nice and  
short, and it also means that the *whole* of life  
happens outside our window. We only have net  
curtains in the living room, so we see it all!

There is a constant stream of joggers and dog  
walkers, and people meeting outside our house to  
go for a walk. Over the last couple of weeks, the  
pavement outside our house has been covered in

shaving foam, purple powder, confetti and trampled carnations. People stand in our doorway in order to have their photos taken, and a number of times, I have been having lunch or working at the table, and someone has peered in, hurrying away when they realise that someone lives there!

Every time it happens, I think of the Dutch Calvinists who allegedly had no curtains at home, perhaps motivated by Paul's instruction, 'let us live honourably, as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy.' – although I assure you the fact we only have net curtains has nothing to do with Calvinist ideas of sin and shame!

I'm not going to tell you to get rid of your curtains, but I do want us to think a little about what the Lord says in today's Gospel:

'Have no fear; for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.'

We have the contrast between what is secret and what is revealed, between what is hidden and what will be made known.

This is a theme we see elsewhere in the Scriptures.

In the Letter to the Colossians, Paul writes, ‘for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.’

And here too we see the future outworking of this theme.

In the end, what is hidden will be made known.

In popular imagination, this is connected with ideas of judgement – of a final reckoning, of things weighed in the balance. But I’m not sure that is what we see here. We might think back to Simeon’s prophecy:

Christ is a sign that will be opposed, ‘so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed.’

What is hidden will be made known.

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In this light, these words of the Lord might not sound as comforting as we might hope.

Perhaps that is why they are prefaced with, 'Have no fear.'

And again in this passage, Jesus says, 'Fear not...'

After all, with our obsession with sin and shame, the idea of the hidden things being revealed, seems scary.

We all have metaphorical curtains, to hide things from the world, sometimes even from ourselves.

In a place like Oxford, it is easy to feel that we are just managing to convince everyone else that we belong here – but that with one misstep the game will be given away; that we will be seen as we see ourselves, as flawed and fraudulent. Our defences go up, we hide those things, of which, for whatever reason, we are ashamed.

But this passage makes it clear to us that nothing is hidden from God. We are told that not one sparrow will fall to the ground without God knowing about it – an image which takes me back to primary school:

‘there are hundreds of sparrows, thousands, millions, they’re two a penny, far too many there must be...’ and so on.

Jesus says,

‘Even the hairs of your head are all numbered.’

Everything about us is already known – St Augustine tells us that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. So God knows us better than we know ourselves, and still the Lord tells us, ‘Have no fear.’

Whatever is behind those curtains, whatever we hide from the world and from ourselves, we are known and loved by God.

We are not to be afraid of things being revealed, we are not to be Christians whispering in the dark.

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In the knowledge that we are known and loved, we are to be emboldened by the Gospel: 'What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops.'

This is part of a missionary discourse in Matthew, as Jesus instructs the disciples to make the Good News public, and to trust in God's care for them. They are not to be afraid of revelation.

So, are we just to get rid of our curtains?

How are we to live the missionary life that Christ calls us to here? I think, in part, our Gospel reading helps us to see through the divisions we set up, the ways we dissemble and cloak things.

'Nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.'

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There is a Syriac Persian martyr text, which tells of a saint who lived his faith ‘b-kesya w b-gelya’ – in secret and openly.

These two words are used in the Syriac translation of this Gospel, translated here as ‘covered’ and ‘revealed.’ And often in Syriac they are contrasted, just like in our Gospel reading.

But in this martyr text, they are not contrasted, rather they point to an integrity of living – a faith which is the same at home, behind the curtains, and openly, in public.

This is the kind of life we are called to, where our faith makes a difference to how we live our lives. We are aware of the disjuncture between faith and the secular, particularly in a place like Oxford, where attitudes range from the complacent to the hostile. And so the Lord’s missionary discourse matters for us.

‘What I tell you in the dark, utter in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim upon the housetops.’

The Gospel calls us to a new way of life, a life of integrity, where our faith matters, both in public and in private. This might seem like a scary prospect, but we mustn't be afraid.

'Have no fear.'

*Nothing is hidden from God*, and we are still loved. Perhaps those Dutch Calvinists had a point!

Don't take your curtains down when you get home, but 'live honourably as in the day' -

Take down those metaphorical curtains, those ways we try and hide things from God, from others, and from ourselves. For 'nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.'

Amen.