

Sunday 19 October 2025 A Reflection Rev Wayne Toleafoa

PERSEVERANCE

This Sunday, the Revised Common Lectionary (Year C) readings revolve around the themes of **perseverance, divine justice, and covenantal renewal**.

In Brief:

In Jeremiah 31:27–34 – God promises a *new covenant*, written on the hearts of the people. It's a vision of restoration and intimate relationship, where forgiveness and transformation are central.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

In 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5 – Paul urges Timothy to remain steadfast in the Scriptures and to proclaim the word “in season and out of season,” even when it's difficult. It is a call to *resilient witness and faithful endurance*.

I solemnly urge you: ²proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favourable or unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching.

Finally, in our gospel reading from Luke 18:1–8 – Jesus tells the colourful parable of the persistent widow who keeps knocking on the door of an indifferent judge. Her persistent and unwavering pursuit of justice is rewarded. Jesus connects this to the nature of God's justice and the need for *faith that does not give up or lose heart. Persevere! Eventually the door will be open.*

When we look at the injustices in our world today, and the powers behind the injustices, it's easy to give up and think we can never win. The parable of the persistent widow tells us otherwise. God has always been a God of justice and one day God's justice will prevail. That is the optimistic message of the parable.

All three readings this Sunday invite us to focus on perseverance, covenantal intimacy, and the assurance that God hears and responds, even when our life seems like a long night of knocking on the doors of heaven.

I've told this story before to this parish, but when I was in my second or third year of university I felt like giving up my studies. There was a combination of reasons. I was struggling with time management. My assignments weren't always on time. I was too

busy with my social life and involved in church youth group leadership and social activism, as many uni students were. My results were affected. My morale was low.

So, I told my father I wanted to give up Uni and work for a year .

He asked me if I knew 'Percy'. I thought he was referring to my cousin named Percy, so I replied, 'You mean Percy?' Thinking my father was about to compare me to my successful cousin Percy.

And my father replied, ' No! Not that PercyPercy Verance!

Make that Percy – Percy Verance your best friend - and you will go far.

I did persevere and managed to complete my Auckland degree which opened up my opportunity to do what I really wanted to do – Theology and Biblical Studies.

You may have a story of persistence or perseverance that you can tell. I hope you will share those stories with others who may need some encouragement.

All three of our readings are important. The intimate covenant with God in Jeremiah where God will write the commandments in our hearts and not merely demand a cold adherence to written commandments.

Today, the Holy Spirit writes God's Commands on our hearts or consciences. We quite often 'know' what God wants us to do, although sometimes we lack the courage to obey. But God doesn't abandon us. We are still in a loving relationship with God, albeit an unequal relationship.

Paul encourages Timothy to keep preaching the gospel in and out of season - when its popular and when it is not. When people listen - and when they do not. Keep preaching and living the gospel of Christ's love.

That is still the mission of the church, to show Christ's love even when our faith is not popular.

The persistence of the widow seeking justice represents truth speaking to power. Today, in our own country and around the world, the marginalized and the ignored continue to knock on the doors of power, demanding justice.

Today, is a very special day in the life of this parish, and a very special day in the lives of two special women in our parish.

Soon we will baptize Margie Kay and Raewyn Pascoe. Two lovely women who have been in our congregation for a while.

What's special is that these two mature women have independently from one another, asked to be baptized as a sign of their re-commitment to their faith in Christ and their commitment to the Church.

When I let Margie and Raewyn individually, I knew that there was another person seeking baptism, and asked would they be okay if they were baptized together – they were overjoyed and happy to be baptized with one another.

It's not an easy thing to publicly declare your faith, or to seek baptism, especially when you are mature, but both women had the courage to do so and are happy to be baptized together.

Baptism means many things. I could write a book on baptism, but one of the key things it symbolizes is passing from an old life to a new life. For Margie and Raewyn, it marks a new beginning – even though they have both been believers for some time.

I feel it is an honour for me, to perform their baptisms on behalf of the Church – local and universal.

They are being baptized and confirmed into the PCANZ but also baptised into the holy catholic /universal church.

What can I say to Margie and Raewyn?

Find your joy and your strength in your faith in the Christ who is with you always.

Find your strength and joy in the Holy Spirit whom we receive in our baptism.

Find your joy and strength in God who is the Ground of our existence.

Love God with your heart, your soul, your mind and with all your strength. And you will know what the joy of the Lord means.

Love others because you have been loved and blessed.

It's become a cliché now to say that it takes a village to raise a child. I think that is true of all Christians. The church is our village. We are nurtured by others and we, in turn, nurture others.

Raewyn & Margie, I hope you will consider this parish your village as you learn from it and as you contribute to teaching others what you believe Christ is teaching you.

PRAYER

God of covenant and compassion,
You write Your law not on stone, but on the living tablets of our hearts.

You speak through Scripture, shaping us for truth and service.
You call us to pray without ceasing, to seek justice with courage,
And to walk faithfully in Your way.

In the wrestling and the waiting,
In the joy and the struggle,
May we be formed by Your Word,
Strengthened by Your Spirit,
And sent in Your name—
To love, to serve, and to persist
Until Your justice flows like a mighty river.

Through Jesus Christ,
Who taught us to pray and never lose heart,
Amen.