Homily for Choral Evensong 16th October 2026 (Ridley & Latimer)

Ezekiel 34.17-end & John 14.1-14

"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."

We hear these words every year on this day — Latimer's final encouragement to Ridley as the flames were lit beneath them in Oxford. They are famous, stirring, and often repeated. But they are not simply a dramatic flourish from the past. They remind us of something deeper: that Christian witness is often quiet, costly, and unseen — and yet it shapes the life of the Church in ways that endure far beyond any single moment.

And into that reflection, today's Gospel speaks with extraordinary clarity.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me." John 14 begins not with triumph, but with **reassurance** — Christ speaking to disciples who are anxious, uncertain, and afraid. Ridley and Latimer knew that fear. They lived through upheaval, persecution, and the threat of death. Yet they held to Christ's promise: that faithfulness is never wasted, and that the path of obedience leads to the Father.

Ridley and Latimer were not perfect men. They were not saints in the sense of flawless holiness. They were human, with convictions, blind spots, and the limitations of their age. But they were **faithful**. They were **courageous**. And they were **willing** to stand for the truth of the gospel even when the cost was everything.

Their story invites us to reflect on **three marks of Christian witness**, illuminated by John 14.

1. Faithfulness in the Small Things

Jesus says, **"Where I am, there you may be also."** That promise is not only for the dramatic moments of life, but for the ordinary ones.

Before the flames, before the trial, before the public drama, Ridley and Latimer lived long years of quiet ministry — preaching, teaching, visiting the sick, shaping the Church through patient labour. Their martyrdom was just the final chapter, not the whole story.

Most Christian witness happens in the small things:

- in the prayers we offer when no one sees,
- in the kindness we extend without reward,
- in the integrity we keep when compromise would be easier.

Ridley and Latimer remind us that faithfulness is not forged in moments of crisis, but in the **long obedience** of *ordinary days* — the very path Christ walks with us.

2. Courage Rooted in Conviction

Jesus says, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."** Ridley and Latimer believed that — not as an idea, but as a conviction worth living and dying for.

Their courage was not bravado. It was not defiance for its own sake. It was **conviction** — the deep, settled belief that the gospel of Christ is worth **everything**.

Courage in the Christian life is rarely dramatic. It is often quiet, steady, and costly in ways that others may never notice. It is the courage to speak truth gently; to stand firm without bitterness; to hold to Christ when the world pulls us elsewhere.

Ridley and Latimer show us that courage is **not** loud — it is **faithful**. It is rooted in Christ, who is the way when the path is hard, the truth when the world is confused, and the life when death seems near.

3. Hope That Outlives Us

Jesus says, **"The one who believes in me will also do the works that I do… and greater works than these."**

Latimer's words about lighting a candle were not triumphalism. They were **hope** — the pure and simple hope that God can take even the darkest moment and turn it into light for generations to come.

And he was right. Their **witness** helped shape the English Reformation. Their **courage** strengthened the Church. Their **faith** inspired countless believers. **The candle they lit still burns…**

We may never face the trials they faced. But we are called to the same hope: the hope that what we do for Christ — however small, however hidden — is never wasted. God weaves our faithfulness into His larger story, and Christ Himself multiplies our witness.

A Word for Us Today

Ridley and Latimer remind us that Christian witness is not about being noticed. It is about being **faithful**.

It is not about dramatic gestures. It is about **quiet courage**.

It's definitely not about securing our legacy. It is about **trusting God** to use our lives in ways we may never see or understand.

And perhaps this is the most important lesson: **The Church is sustained not by the loud, but by the faithful; not by the celebrated, but by the steadfast; not by the visible, but by the devoted.**

Ridley and Latimer stood firm in their moment. We are called to stand firm in ours — in our homes, our workplaces, our communities, our church. Not with fear, but with **hope**. Not with anger, but with **grace**. Not with pride, but with the **quiet confidence** that Christ is Lord.

And always with the words of Jesus in our hearts: **"Do not let your hearts be troubled."**

Closing Prayer

Lord God, who strengthened your servants Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer to bear witness to the truth of your gospel even unto death, grant us the same courage in our day: faithfulness in the small things, steadfastness in trial, and hope that endures. May the light they kindled continue to shine in your Church, and may our lives reflect the same grace and truth in the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Fr. Mike.

(Office hymn: 'Great is Thy Faithfulness')