**The Rt Revd Dr Eleanor Sanderson, Bishop of Hull, reflects on John 17.6‐19 for Christian Aid Week.**

This week is Christian Aid Week, and we're invited to come together to pray together, to give together, and work together against the experiences of poverty all around our world. One of the very first scriptures that Jesus brings to life is reading from the prophet Isaiah and saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because I have come to preach good news to the poor.” And a concern around poverty is at the central heart of our Christian message and our Christian life. The gospel that we're given this Sunday is part of Jesus's high priestly prayer, towards the end of his earthly ministry, in which he prays for the disciples, for those who will come to believe through the disciples and prays that we might have the same unity and love and fellowship that Jesus experiences in the company of the Trinity.

Jesus also speaks about glory. He speaks about the glory that he had with God as the world began, and how his life is glorifying the father and how his desire is that the disciples, that those of us who follow him, will share in that glory.

Now glory is sometimes translated different in our cultural imaginations. Sometimes we think of glory as extravagance and beauty and finery, equating it actually with wealth and wellbeing. But in the biblical languages, what we translate as ‘glory’ is far more better understood, actually connected with suffering. It's a very weighty, literal word, and it reflects the way that in pain, in suffering, there is a deepening of our dignity at times, and the presence of God, that God has a particular presence. His dignifying presence is particularly there in times when our dignity is challenged through injustice, poverty and oppression.

So the glory of God meets us in those dehumanising times and meets us there, and overcomes that dehumanising influence of poverty or oppression with the glorious presence of God's power and God's Spirit. So this week, as we think about our lives and how we are part of the body of Christ, a body that is suffering in poverty, and a body that has the capacity to alleviate suffering, I pray that we do so with an eye to the glory of God.

I want to share the story of Mama Emama with you. Mama Emama was a member of the Mothers’ Union in the Diocese of Kagera in Tanzania, and I met her when she was a very, very old lady. But in her younger life, she had been a huge influence on one of my dear friends who had grown up in that diocese and in that area. One of her memories is that in a time of famine, Mama Emama would come and make sure that her and her brothers and sisters had food from her crops. When I met Mama Emama, she could barely see and her hands were scarred with burns from trying to light the fire, which was a means of both heating, but also cooking.

And I sat with her with my friend who'd known her from a child, and as we lit the fire together, we spoke of the goodness of God. And we sang and sang and sang song after song, proclaiming the goodness of God. That was a glorious moment in the truest sense of glory in the gospels that we have - the glory of God being utterly present to us, restoring and redeeming the dehumanising impact of poverty and oppression and injustice.

So may you know the true glory of God and participate in God's glory in earth as it is in heaven. Amen.