

Monday 14th June 2021: Psalm 44; Job 19; Romans 9:1-18

'I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.'

Today again, we see Job responding to his friend Bildad, ten times now Job moans his friends have reproached him. In the midst of all his suffering, his friends are surely not helping and yet, still he is able to say with such assurance in verse 25 of today's chapter 'I know that my redeemer lives.'

He may be angry at God and asking for answers about why he is suffering, but one thing he does not doubt, is that his redeemer lives.

What wonderful words of assurance and hope in the midst of suffering.

Before I was ordained, I went to visit a member of the congregation from the church I attended in Kings Lynn in hospital, her life was drawing to an end, and a few of us went to sit and pray ... and as we did so we sang.

There is a redeemer,
Jesus, Gods own son,
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
Holy One
*Thank you O my father,
For giving us your Son
And leaving your Spirit
Till the work on earth is done.*

Jesus, my redeemer,
Name above all names
Precious lamb of God, Messiah
O for sinners slain
Thank you ...

When I stand in glory,
I will see his face
And there I'll serve my King for ever
In that holy place
Thank you ...

Words I would sing again many years later, at the bedside of another wonderful Christian woman, Trish Clawson as her earthly life drew to a close.

Whatever life throws at us, we can say with confidence, I know that my redeemer lives ... and one day we will see him face to face.

So today, however life is going for you, whether things are just going on by, life is really good, or you are facing difficulties. Whatever announcements are made about further easing of lockdowns ... or not. Remember we have a redeemer! And Praise God!!!

May God bless you

Heather

Daily Reflection for Tuesday 15th June 2021

Job 21, Psalm 48, Romans 9:19 – end

“Tell the next generation that this is God, our God, for ever and ever. He will be our guide for ever”

To paraphrase these words from the end of Psalm 48, God is faithful! Tell others.

This psalm is one of several ceremonial ones in praise of Jerusalem, and especially praising God for his deliverance in times of war and potential invasion when the city was threatened. Jerusalem was the Holy City, the city, mountain and Temple which represented God’s dwelling place on earth. The central section of the psalm describes an assault on the city which fails because the enemy loses heart when they realise the glory and strength of what God has established. Yet we know, and the Jews knew through their history that Jerusalem was not invincible, and that the Temple was destroyed and the city razed on more than one occasion. Jesus too predicted its downfall and ruin when the disciples spoke so admiringly of the Temple – in Mark 13, and in Luke 19.

Although in this psalm the enemies were successfully repelled, no doubt there were still victims of the conflict, innocent people caught up in political manoeuvring. The age-old issue of the suffering of innocent people and the apparent flourishing of selfish and evil people is one which has challenged us over the centuries, and in today’s reading from Job 21 we hear him arguing with his friends and with God, mainly from his viewpoint of his own terrible suffering as one of the innocents. God is faithful and merciful, but his sovereign purpose may take place over generations. There is no cosy entitlement on earth, but through Christ, the only completely innocent man, and his suffering and sacrificial love for us, we have been promised an inheritance in heaven of far greater value and joy than anything we can imagine in earthly terms.

As Christians, we can read psalm 48 in the light of the coming of Christ and the new covenant that is established by his death and resurrection in Jerusalem. Christ becomes the sacrifice, the sanctuary, the place of refuge, revealing God’s justice and loving faithfulness to all those who worship. The worship we offer on earth prepares us for the worship of heaven, and we are charged to witness to God’s faithfulness for all time.

To use some words from a favourite hymn... “as thou has been, thou forever will be.

...strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

Great is thy faithfulness... all I have needed thy hand has provided, great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me”

As we enjoy the beauty and splendour of the natural world around us, may we too “join with all nature in manifold witness to God’s great faithfulness, mercy and love”

God bless.

Margaret S.

Wednesday 16th June

Reflection

Each of the readings today, Psalm 119, Job 22 and Romans 10, in their own way urge us as Christians to become better acquainted with God.

Job, in verse 21 says 'Acquaint yourself with God and be at peace with Him',

while Psalm 119 asks

64 The earth, O Lord, is full of your steadfast love; teach me your statutes.

65 You have dealt well with your servant, O Lord, according to your word.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge,

In his letter to the Romans, Paul says about the Jews;

they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. 3 Since they did not know the righteousness of God

He writes of his respect for their zeal or enthusiasm. They love God and seek to honour Him and obey Him. The Jewish people of Paul's day were especially passionate in their worship of God.

Paul is saddened, though, that Israel's zeal is not driven by a true understanding of who God is or what He wants from them. Paul knows from experience the traditions the Jewish religious leaders have and their exhaustive knowledge of the Scriptures. To know all of that, however, and to not know Christ is to know far too little.

How little time or thought we give to the character of God as revealed in Jesus Christ! We must be on intimate terms with Him. To know God, just as to know a person, we must 'live with' Him, spend time with Him, must bring Him into the petty details of daily life.

And, interestingly, today is the feast of St Richard of Chichester whose famous prayer continues that theme of desiring to know Jesus better:

*Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the benefits Thou hast given me,
For all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,
May I know Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
Follow Thee more nearly.
Amen*

So, I really feel that today's message is clear, keep on getting to know this God who loves you, who died for you, who takes your sins and gives you his righteousness. Spend time with him in prayer and learn more about his characteristics. Only by knowing God intimately can we find lasting peace.



Reflections for Thursday 17th June

Psalm: 63[Calling to God]

Old Testament: Job 23[Knowing the unseen God]

New Testament: Romans 10: 11-end [A mandate for evangelism]

Theme: Mission and evangelism

Tough times in life are normally referred to as wilderness experiences. When a person is experiencing difficulties we say they are going through the wilderness, implying the link to the wilderness as a place of struggle.

In Psalm 63, David was going through such experience both literally and metaphorically. Literally he had fled to the desert following the opposition from his estranged son Absalom, metaphorically he was exposed and vulnerable and in need of supplies to sustain him. In today's reflection it is not the experience which is of primary focus, but it is how a person responds to the experience, which I also think is the point of the Psalm. David here cries out to God, he does not look at the experience in despair but he looks up to God in hope. The Psalmist is calling to God for security in the midst of danger and scarcity. Verse 1 says it all when he calls, "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being sings for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water."

Job 23 reminds us of the most difficult thing when we go through the wilderness experience, which is the time of waiting not knowing when and how God will step in. It is living in that hope and expectancy as the storm rages in and around you while you wait. Job shows us that although silence can be refreshing and relaxing and comforting, in this case God's silence inflicts fear and possibly even anger because a person is waiting without knowing when this will end and how it will end. But to trust in God brings comfort because with God one is assured that this will certainly come to an end. He says, "If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say to me. Would he vigorously oppose me? No, he would not press charges against me. There the upright can establish their innocence before him, and there I would be delivered forever from my judge. [Verse 3-7]"

Finally, Romans 10 is Paul's criticism regarding the lack of faith. When people go through the wilderness experience, instead of turning to God and calling upon him, they look at the problem and get caught up in it ending in despair. The whole message of the Christian faith is that the world could not save itself from sin, but God did it by sending Jesus to die on the cross. To believe in Jesus is all God requires. In Romans 10:11 he says, "As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." In verses 12 -13 he adds to say, "For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But he also leaves us with a task of sharing this Good News. He says, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? ¹⁵ And how can anyone preach unless they are sent". The is the imperative to which the church is involved in its mission – to live out God's word and evangelism, to testify by word the Good News of Jesus.[verses 14-15]

Friday June 18th 2021

Psalm 13

(I know this isn't the Psalm set for today but these are the words that have come to mind)

As I sit here writing at the computer, Greater Manchester and parts of Lancashire are being advised to minimise travel in and out of the area and avoid meeting people indoors. The planned lifting of the last set of restrictions in England on 21 June is looking less and less likely. So are hopes of visiting family on the South Coast in July and plans to visit Thomas & Sabine in Sweden (still on the Amber List) or for them to come to the UK look a long way away. How long, Lord? How long?

In this psalm, the phrase "how long" occurs four times in the first two verses, indicating the depth of David's distress. Sometimes all we need to do is talk over a problem with a friend to help put it into perspective. David expressed his feelings to God and found strength. By the end of his prayer, he was able to profess hope and trust in God. Through prayer we can express our feelings and talk our problems out with God. He helps us regain the right perspective, and this gives us peace.

David frequently claimed that God was slow to act on his behalf. We often feel this same impatience. It seems that evil and suffering go unchecked, and we wonder when God is going to stop them. David affirmed that he would continue to trust God no matter how long he had to wait for an answer. Patience is one of the fruits of the Spirit that Paul talks about in the letter to the Galatians. When we feel impatient, remember David's steadfast faith in God's unfailing love.

David was faithful to God and trusted whole-heartedly in him, but he felt the pressure of his problems as much as anyone. Instead of giving up or giving in however, David held on to his faith. In times of despair it is much harder to hold on than to give up. But if you give up on God, you give in to a life of despair.

Take Care

God Bless

xxGillxx

Reflection 19th June (Elisabeth)

Psalm 68 (Job 25-26; Romans 11:13-24)

It was wonderful on Sunday 6th June at St Mary's singing our last hymn enthusiastically outside in the churchyard. It was "O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder/Consider all the works thy had hath made" (How great thou art). The hymn starts with looking around at the beauty of God's creation but goes on to remember the even more awesome fact of God sending his Son into our world to take our sins upon himself as he died on the cross. It ends by looking to the future and his second coming.

The psalm set for today starts differently, calling on God to scatter his enemies, but goes on to say "May the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful." (v 3) It is basically a psalm of praise, which also looks back, as many psalms do, to the great things God has done for his people in the past.

God is praised for his power, his character and his love - "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling." (v 5) Verses 7-18 look back to the story of Israel's experience of God's power and his care for them from the time of the exodus from Egypt. And this leads on to more praise - "Praise be to the Lord, to God our Saviour, who daily bears our burdens." (v 19) God is with us through the ups and downs of our life journey, as Psalm 23 also reminds us.

Verses 24-27 are a picture of the joyful procession of the faithful up to the temple, full of praise and music. This is followed by a prayer to God to show his power again as he had in the past, in verses 28-31, and the psalm ends with a section of more praise "Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth, sing praise to the Lord." (v 32)

As we sang in the hymn that Sunday, looking around at all that God has made leads to praise, as does looking back to what he has done for us. But looking around us and recognising what he is doing now can also do this. Praise often starts with thanksgiving for specific answers to prayer, and thanksgiving for what God has done in the past. Praise for who God is, for his character, both loving and just, for his majesty, his power, is not the same as thanksgiving, but moves on from it. And praise in music adds an extra dimension to our praising. Words alone don't always seem enough, which is why we long to be able to sing our praises together indoors again. Praise to God brings us deep joy, and leads to increasing hope for the future as our trust in God grows through our thanksgiving, our praise, and our prayers.

Let's pray that we will be able to sing our praises all together in church again before too long!