

Monday 19th April 2021: Psalms 96 & 97; Deuteronomy 5:1-22; Ephesians 1:1-14

Of all the material in this morning's readings, from the giving of the 10 commandments in Deuteronomy, to Paul's opening sections of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, with musings on predestination, and all the wonderful verses in the psalms, I have chosen just three words to focus on today.



The Lord reigns

How often do we feel overwhelmed by the pressures and stresses of this life? How often do we feel pushed and pulled in every direction, and wonder which way to turn.

And yet The Lord reigns

Do we need to hear those words afresh today, when we see the atrocities taking place around the world, as we come to terms with suffering in our own lives and in the lives of people around us?

Of course we already know it, we know the Lord reigns, we know that God reigns supreme over all things, he is the creator of the universe and everything in it. I am reminded of God's response to Job in the face of all Job's sufferings as Job demands an answer as to why he has been treated in the way he has.

God responds to Job with these words *'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? on what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?'*

Over the next three chapters, God lays out what he has done and finally Job responds in chapter 42 *'I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted.'*

The Lord reigns

This is surely what we celebrate at Easter time, that Jesus has conquered death, that through his risen life he has won for us the victory over sin and death. The Lord reigns

And yet sometimes living in the now but not yet, we need to be reminded of it again and again.

So today. Let us cling to this promise ... the Lord reigns, he is supreme over all and let us not be downhearted, but rejoice in the Lord always.

May God bless you

Heather

Daily Reflection for Tuesday 20th April 2021

Psalm 98, Deuteronomy 5:22-end, Ephesians 1: 15 – end

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous things. Psalm 98:1

Most of you will have seen the film *The Sound of Music* at least once, some people may watch it every Christmas! You will recall that it is the story of a nun, Maria who needs to escape from the convent to the Austrian hills to be able to sing loudly and to her heart's content – it is true praise for her. To review her vocation, she is sent as a governess to a motherless family under the father's very strict military regime, all the children being loved but that love not openly expressed. Maria introduces song into the family's lifestyle which liberates them all in the widest sense, individually, as a family, and then from a country under Nazi control. When I read Psalm 98, I can't help but imagine Maria in the opening sequence of the film, bursting over the hilltop with outstretched arms, singing "The hills are alive with the sound of music". V.8 of the psalm says "Let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord".

During this pandemic we have been unable to sing in worship in church, in secular groups or in choirs. All who love singing, whether we are talented or not, have greatly missed this for over a year now. We have been allowed to play instruments like guitars and drums and pianos, but not to sing. When we are allowed to sing together again, it will be like a new song of praise and thankfulness. During the relative quietness, especially last Spring, we were all very aware of the beautiful birdsong and the wonders of the created world around us. Nature has sung to us, and soon we can join in.

Psalm 98 may have originally been written as a victory song for God's help in overcoming enemy attacks. The right hand and holy arm of the victor, (v.1) and the blowing of trumpets and horns (v.6) were associated with victorious celebrations.

The psalm is in 3 parts – firstly a personal thanksgiving song, but the psalmist's song is not enough. All the nations, everyone on earth, is urged to join in. Then they must all add their musical instruments – lyres, trumpets and horns, and I would want to add in the organ in full swell, flutes, violins and cellos – the whole orchestra in a Hallelujah chorus!

Even that is not enough to praise God – in v.7 & 8 all the natural world must join in too, the roar of the waves, the rush of river water, the mountains and hills, the birds, the animals, the whales and creatures of the seas.

And the reason for all this exuberant praise? God has remembered (v.3). In his steadfast love and faithfulness, he has kept safe the people and creation he loves, and has won victory for the whole earth, and we see more than the psalmist in the light, new life and hope of Easter. But it's not just thanksgiving for the past and present fulfilment of promises. In v.9 we are all exhorted to praise him in anticipation of what he will do in the future, looking forward in sure and certain hope to God's coming reign on earth. Alleluia, praise the Lord!

Lord God, just and true, you make your salvation known in the sight of all nations.
Tune the song of our hearts to the music of your creation,
as you come among us to judge the earth,
Through our Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen

God Bless you, and free your heart to sing, even if there are no hills!

Margaret S.

Reflection for Wednesday 21st April 2021

Reading Ephesians 2:1-10

Have you ever thought that it's the little things in life that make a big difference? My Granny was only 4'11" and she always said that good things came in little parcels! It only takes a small good deed to make someone's day and only a little 'ta' to bring pleasure.

It's the same with words. A little word can make a big difference. How many times have we all said 'if' in a sentence and realise that the 'if' is the thing that will make the whole dream come true. In our reading for today there is a little word that makes a big difference and that word is 'but'. Verses 3-5 read *Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. BUT God who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in trespasses.* Basically we were dead but for God. Later in Ephesians 2 it says *we were without hope and without God in the world BUT now in Christ Jesus we have been brought near to God.* That word but is just a little word but it makes a huge difference.

Just writing these thoughts a line from an old chorus came to me and that sums up what I want us to reflect on today. *I was lost BUT Jesus found me.* I was that sheep that wandered astray but the shepherd (Jesus) came looking for me. I was that sinner dead in my sins BUT Jesus died on the cross to save me from my sins.

As we reflect on the little things of life today let's thank God for the fact that but for God we would be heading for a lost world but we can now head for a home in glory with God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

God bless

Steve Adcock

Reflections for Thursday 22nd April

Psalm 136 **Old Testament:** Deuteronomy 7: 1-11 **New Testament:** Ephesians 2: 11-end

Theme: Give thanks for God's endless love

Psalm 136 tells us about the many things we ought to thank God for, and he also links those things which we receive from God and which compel us to thank him, are done by God for us due to his endless love. He repeats throughout the Psalm with the words, "Give thanks to the Lord, His love endures forever." It may be difficult to think of the worst possible scenario of what could have happened to you or me in the last 24 hours. Something too bad to even think about or imagine, but these things are happening to people around the world. We can not go into a detail discussion but think why does it happen to some and not to others? Let your soul today say, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good and his love for me endures forever. Read Psalm 136 through and think of each verse.

Deuteronomy 7: 1-11 is a story which at the heart of it, is to do with a nation experiencing the protection of God in times of adversity. A nation which was surrounded by hostility in every side but put its confidence in God. Obviously today the context has changed when society has become pluralistic in culture and religion. One thing remains the same that God is the same and does not change and sin remains the same before God. Verse 4 sums up the whole idea behind the prohibitions. It says the reason that God is putting prohibitions is because if he doesn't, "for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you."

He further adds in verse 6-9 that, "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh King of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments".

In Ephesians 2: 11-end shows that in Jesus all people are united, so we have all reasons to thank God and his ultimate endless love was shown by Jesus on the cross. Amen

Friday April 23rd 2021 - Saint George's Day
Joshua 1:1-9 & Ephesians 6:10-20

Today we are urged to remember Saint George, the patron saint of England. Very little is known about St. George's life, but it is thought he was a high ranking officer in the Roman army who was killed in around AD 303. Stories of his strength and courage soon spread throughout Europe. The best-known story about St. George is his fight with a dragon, but it is highly unlikely that he ever fought a dragon, and even more unlikely that he ever visited England. It was probably the 12th century Crusaders, however, who first invoked his name as an aid in battle. King Edward III made him the Patron Saint of England when he formed the Order of the Garter in St. George's name in 1350, and the cult of the Saint was further advanced by King Henry V, at the battle of Agincourt in northern France. Shakespeare made sure that nobody would forget St. George, and has King Henry V finishing his pre-battle speech with the famous phrase, 'Cry God for Harry, England and St. George!'



Only last week we saw the funeral of H.R.H The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh at St George's Chapel in Windsor.

In the reading from Joshua, God is urging Joshua to be strong and courageous as he leads the People of Israel into the Promised Land.

"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord Your God will be with you wherever you go."

In the reading from Ephesians, Paul advises that we all put on the armour of God - the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation and carry the sword of the Spirit.

I wonder, are you afraid at the moment? Is there something worrying you? Are you concerned about the future, what the "new normal" will mean, have we come out of lockdown too quickly? Whatever is disturbing you, 'be strong and very courageous" and remember the promise of Christ "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

xxGillxx

https://youtu.be/x9Bqxzk_P8w

Reflection 24th April (Elisabeth)

Ephesians 3:14 - end; (Deuteronomy 8; Psalm 110)

Those of you who know the car park area behind Long Stratton village hall will remember that there used to be three very large spreading trees on the grassy area at the back of it, by the path leading to Chapel Avenue. Last December there was storm Bella, with tremendous gusty winds and lots of heavy rain. I remember walking, the next day, down the path to the car park, and under the last tree, whose branches were getting very low over the end of the path, thinking "I almost need to duck and I'm not that tall!". The very next day after that I walked the same way and had a shock - the enormous tree I had remarked on had been uprooted and it was on its side with its branches covering most of the car park. Its roots were still partly in the soil in places, but had pulled up part of the tarmac path as well as a large area of grass. The storm must have weakened it and a less strong gust the next night finally brought it down. That was a long established and well-rooted tree which had lasted through many storms over the years, but was finally felled as a result of one. Perhaps its great spreading branches had made it more susceptible.

Our reading from Ephesians is headed "A prayer for the Ephesians" but it's also a prayer for us and all Christians - and what a wonderful prayer it is! It speaks of being "rooted and established" in God's love - with firm roots in him and his love supporting us we should be able to weather the storms we may have to face from time to time. But there's so much more in this prayer - being rooted in God's love helps us to experience the greatness of Christ's love which is within us and surrounds us. Paul prays that we "may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge". This love is inexhaustible, greater than we can ever fully understand. Those words remind me of the song about the love of Jesus being so high you can't go over it, so low you can't go under it, and so wide you can't go round it - O wonderful love!

Through the power of the Holy Spirit our faith can grow as Christ dwells within our hearts, nourishing and strengthening our roots in God's love for us. And it's not just for us as individuals - "together with all the saints" means the prayer is for the whole church community as well, and for those who have gone before us. Paul prays that we will be "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" - an amazing prayer. The Holy Spirit living within us, transforming our lives, and filling us with God's love so that it flows out to others around us. As we keep close to God in prayer and worship, and through reading his Word, and encourage each other in our faith, the Holy Spirit can do his transforming work.

The words towards the end of this prayer "to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us" are a reminder that nothing is impossible with God, but also that he works through us, sometimes in ways beyond our expectations or understanding. God is greater than we can possibly comprehend, but we are called to join with him in his work here on earth. This can be challenging as we look at ourselves, and around us, but are our expectations too limited? Do we need to widen our vision? There are times when we need to step out in faith and just trust God for the outcome. We may be encouraged, and sometimes we may even be amazed!