

21st – 26th June 2021 *Compiled by Revd Theresa Morton (Assistant Curate)*

Monday 21st June

Psalm 3 : 1-3, 14-15

2 Samuel 15 : 13-14, 30, 16 :5-13

In some Bibles, today's Psalm is headed 'Trust in God under Adversity. A Psalm of David, when he fled from his son Absalom.' It's a prayer directly related to the events described in the Samuel reading. Read the two together.

How do you pray in times of adversity? Are you able to feel the confidence in God being with you through the difficult times that David expresses? Ask God to help you place your trust in him.

Tuesday 22nd June

Psalm 86 : 1-6

2 Samuel 18 : 9 - 10, 14, 24 – 25, 30 – 19 : 3

Absalom was the third son of David. He rebelled against his father, yet still David ordered his protection. In today's reading from Samuel we hear how one of David's men defied David's order and killed Absalom after he got caught in a tree. David is wracked with grief.

This is sadly an all too familiar story; family members fighting, falling out, full of regret when one dies before the relationship is restored.

Is there anyone you need to reach out to in peace? Pray today for the restoring of difficult relationships.

Wednesday 23rd June

Psalm 32 : 1-8

2 Samuel 24 : 2, 9 -17

Today's Psalm, speaking of the joy of forgiveness, may be a blessing after yesterday's reflection on difficult relationships. In both the Psalm and in the ongoing story of David in 2 Samuel, we see the importance of acknowledging our personal wrongdoing. It is all too easy to blame someone else or let others suffer when actually we're the one at fault.

Perhaps today's readings may stir us to seek forgiveness, from God or from someone who's been caught up in something we've done wrong.

Thursday 24th June

Psalm 145 : 1 - 5

1 Kings 2 : 1 – 4, 10 - 12

Today we move on to the book of 1 Kings which, together with 2 Kings, offers an account of Israel's history from the death of David, through the reigns of successive kings and the division of Israel into the separate kingdoms of Israel (North) and Judah (South), until Israel's fall to the Assyrians in 722 BC then Judah's fall to the Babylonians, nearly 140 years later, in 586 BC.

We begin, in 1 Kings 2, with David reaching the end of his forty-year reign, and instructing his son and successor Solomon on the importance of remaining faithful to God. Our Psalm underlines the passing on of knowledge of God from generation to generation; a kind of chain of praise.

Who could you share your knowledge of God with today, either through talking about God directly, a kind act, or simply by praying someone particular will come to know God.

Friday 25th June

Psalm 119 : 9 - 16

1 Kings 3 : 4 - 13

Solomon asks that God will give him “an understanding mind.” He is showing his willingness to be open to God’s direction in all his decisions and actions. And he did become known for his wisdom. Are we able to say, like the Psalmist, “I treasure your word in my heart”?

How good are we at listening to God?

Are there particular words of scripture you particularly treasure? That lift you up, or help you in times of trouble, or that you sing out in joyful praise?

Saturday 26th June

Psalm 68 : 18 – 19, 27 - 35

1 Kings 5 : 1 - 12

Sometimes Bible passages can be jarring. Our Kings reading speaks of Solomon deepening the alliance with King Hiram by engaging Hiram’s skilled workers to help build the temple. If we read on beyond the set passage to verse 13, however, we are given to understand that these 30,000 people were conscripted as forced labour. The additional 150,000 labourers and stone cutters mentioned in verse 15 may also have been forced labour.

What do we make of this use of slaves to build God’s temple in today’s context of facing up to historical human exploitation?

28th – 34rd July *Compiled by Fr John Richards*

Monday 28th June

Psalm 132 : 1 - 9

1 Kings 8 : 1 - 7, 9 – 13

Solomon’s Temple is finished and the Lord’s Covenant Box is brought to the most holy place. Perhaps this wonderful story makes you think about your most prized possession. What is it and where would you place it?

Tuesday 29th June

Psalm 84 : 1 – 10

1 Kings 8 : 22 – 23, 27 - 30

Solomon knew that God could not be contained in the Temple but also knew that it was important for the people to have a special place to pray and worship God. Do you have a special place where you feel close to God? During this last year many of us have had to find new places as we have been unable to go into St Laurence’ Church. Has that made a difference to your faith? Do you think about things differently?

Wednesday 30th June

Psalm 37 : 3 – 6, 30 – 32

1 Kings 10 : 1 - 10

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Jerusalem and to Solomon’s great palace has left her breathless and amazed. This is a story of great wealth and immense possessions. How do we feel about this? Do you think it fits into the teaching of Jesus? The story does describe wonderful hospitality. Are we always as hospitable as we could be?

Thursday 1st July

Psalm 106 : 3,35 - 41

I Kings 11 : 4 - 13

In this passage Solomon is an old man. He has married numerous wives and we are told they turned him away from God. Despite his wealth, his wisdom and his power, in the end he turned his back on the God he had been so faithful to. What do you think of Solomon? Sometimes we are influenced by others around us. Sometimes we are led astray. And sometimes we need to make a stand!

Friday 2nd July

Psalm 81 : 8 - 14

I Kings 11 : 29 – 32, 12 : 19

The story continues and we are told how the kingdom is being divided. Division isn't always a positive thing. Just think of the Church. Once there is a break it seems very difficult for it to mend. Think of times in your own lives when this might have happened. Our relationships are extremely precious and any breakdown or division takes us on a perilous journey and mending them seems almost impossible and is often painful.

Saturday 3rd July

Psalm 106 : 6 – 7, 20 - 23

I Kings 12 : 26 – 32, 13 : 33 - end

Our week ends with a story of total disaster for King Jeroboam. He had turned completely from God and had built shrines to foreign gods. What a hopeless mess! It sometimes feels like that. No way to turn, only the wrong way. But our God is a forgiving God and is always ready to listen. He is always ready to hold our hand and lead us where we do not want to go.

5th July – 10th July *Compiled by Canon Janet Chapman (Rector)*

We concluded last week with being introduced to King Jeroboam. He was the first King of Israel after the split into Israel and Judah. The split is thought to have come about because the northern tribes of Israel resented Solomon's taxes and forced labour and they went into revolt when he died.

During the period covered by the passages for the next three weeks we discover why the books of Kings have such titles – there were a lot of Kings and most of their names seem to begin with A or J! On the whole (the exceptions being Jehu and Josiah) they lead the people away from God to worship of idols and foreign gods (baals.) The King during this week's readings is Ahab who has married Jezebel, the daughter of the King of the neighbouring nation of Tyre. He had adopted her worship of foreign gods and made Samaria a centre for Baal worship. Into this situation God raised up a series of prophets to call the people back to him – not a task for the faint-hearted!

Monday 5th July

Psalm 121

I Kings 17 : 1 – 6

Today we are introduced to the great prophet Elijah who is regarded on a par with Moses e.g. at the Transfiguration of Jesus Peter wanted to build 3 booths – one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But how do you think King Ahab would regard this man standing before him claiming that the one who

controls the weather is the Lord, the God of Israel? How did Elijah feel? Does God send him eastwards as it will be a place of safety? Imagine being Elijah living by the wadi and receiving food delivered by ravens. How does it feel? How does it feel to be reliant upon 'food aid' today?

Tuesday 6th July

Psalm 4

I Kings 17 : 7 – 16

Time has passed by and the drought means the wadi has dried up. Pray for the many people who are living in such situations today. Put yourself in the place of the widow of Zarephath as she goes out to gather sticks to cook the final meal for herself and her son. Hear those oft repeated words from the Lord himself, "Do not be afraid!" Bring your own concerns and fears before God and look out for your equivalent of jar of meal and a jug of oil.

"When I call upon the Lord, he will hear me." Psalm 4 v3b

Wednesday 7th July

Psalm 16 : 1, 6 – end

I Kings 18 : 20 – 39

"The god who answers by fire is indeed God." This is the great show down between Elijah and the prophets of Baal! Why not grab paper and pen and 'doodle' the story – you don't need to draw all the 450 prophets. Get into the mood of Elijah as you doodle. Would you like the Lord to be known today in such a way? What enables you to proclaim that the Lord indeed is God?

And now verse 40: the slaughter of the prophets. How does this make you feel; was it necessary? Simply hold your feelings before God as you ponder this slaughter and that of many others throughout history. I have no easy answers to explain the many acts of slaughter of the Old Testament. They trouble me.

Thursday 8th July

Psalm 65 : 8 - end

I Kings 18 : 41 - 19:9

So Ahab goes away to eat and drink, though the rain hasn't arrived yet. Presumably he still has supplies. Elijah and his servant take to the mountain top to await the rain and when it appears imminent Ahab is sent to return home and to his wife, Jezebel. What would be in his mind on the journey. Did he get a soaking before he arrived – and similarly Elijah? We come to the point where Elijah wants to die.... Sleep and sustenance revive him. What helps to revive you both physically and spiritually? How can they feed you for today?

Friday 9th July

Psalm 27 : 8 - 16

I Kings 19 : 9 – 18

By now Elijah has taken refuge in a cave on Mount Horeb. This is the mountain on which Moses received the ten commandments and, like Moses, he has been sustained for 40 days and 40 nights in the wilderness (19:8.) Jesus too will experience similar. What do think is the tone of Elijah's voice as he tells the Lord all he has been through. Note that it is not until the storm has passed and there is silence that Elijah has the courage to stand at the entrance to the cave. What is his tone as he again explains all that has befallen him? God gives Elijah a 3-fold charge; to anoint new and better Kings for Syria (Hazael) and Israel (Jehu) and Elisha – more of him tomorrow!

Saturday 10th July

Psalm 16 : 1 – 7

1 Kings 19 : 19 – end

Following on from yesterday we should note that Elijah's fulfilling of his charge was neither instantaneous nor quite as simple as giving as the charge implied (which may be of comfort if you are frustrated by the 'simple' things of life turning out to be complicated!) It was actually a messenger of Elisha who anointed Hazael (2 Kings 9.7-15) and Ahab was succeeded by Ahaziah and Jehoram and **then** Jehu (2 Kings 9.1-13) and Elijah remained active for a while longer but we do at least learn of the call of Elisha at this point. What do you make of it? Have you ever been doing one thing and suddenly felt you should be doing another? Do you ever feel frustrated by being surrounded by a lot of half-done tasks? Elisha's actions meant he couldn't return to ploughing the field. Is there something you need to do to draw a line under something you can't or feel you shouldn't return to?

"The Lord himself is my portion and my cup." Psalm 16. 5

12th – 17th July *Compiled by Janice Wones (Reader)*

During the period covered by these passages, the rulers of Israel were Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram and Jehu and the rulers of Judah were Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Athaliah and Joash. So, there were two kings named Ahaziah and two called Jehoram.

Monday 12th July

Psalm 5 : 1 – 5

1 Kings 21 : 1 - 16

Jezebel is a strong and ruthless woman. Not only does Ahab stop sulking when she tells him to, but she uses his name to order the elders of Jezreel to frame and execute Naboth.

I am sure that you would never go that far. But beware of the pride that will not let anyone refuse you. Beware the temptation to use any power or authority that you have to get what you want. It is better to ask God for what you need and to wait patiently.

"In the morning, O Lord, ... I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation."

Tuesday 13th July

Psalm 51 : 1 – 9

1 Kings 21 : 17 - end

Ahab seems like a spoilt brat. He sulks when he cannot have what he wants. He accepts what his wife, Jezebel, gets for him without asking any questions. Then he is very sorry when he is told off by Elijah. When we realise when have done wrong, it is best to admit it, to say sorry and mean it.

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. For I know my transgressions."

Wednesday 14th July

Psalm 31 : 21 – end

2 Kings 2 : 1, 6 – 14

God is going to take Elijah to heaven and, it seems, he wants to face the experience alone. Everyone with prophetic skills knows it is about to happen. Elisha is determined to deserve to inherit Elijah's spirit, so he

remains in his company. The fact that, after Elijah's translation, he too can cause the water of Jordan to be divided, shows that he has succeeded.

Is there anyone whose faith you admire and whose strength of spirit you would like to emulate?

"Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord."

Thursday 15th July

Psalm 97 : 1 – 8

Isaiah 63 : 7 – 9

In the gap since the last reading, Ahab has been killed and his son, Ahaziah, has become king of Israel. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram has married Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chron 18). Ahaziah of Israel has been wounded and died and, because he had no son, his brother Jehoram had become king of Israel.

So, despite the weak and wicked kings of Israel, God still blessed the people with faithful prophets. God trusts that the people would continue to worship him and respect his laws. When they are oppressed and exploited, he is distressed with them.

Thank God for the occasions when he has strengthened and supported you through times of trouble.

"The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad."

Friday 16th July

Psalm 132 : 1 – 5, 11 – 13

2 Kings 11 : 1 – 4, 9 – 18, 20

In the gap since the last reading, Jehoshaphat has died and his son, Jehoram, has become king of Judah. He has died and his son Ahaziah has become king of Judah, in his turn.

You remember that Elijah had warned king Ahab that his family line would be destroyed.

Jehu has had all the sons of Ahab slaughtered and has himself become king of Israel.

Now Athaliah, who is Ahab's daughter and Ahaziah of Judah's mother, does her best to destroy Ahab's descendants in the Judah royal family.

Jehosheba is married to Jehoida, the priest, and she manages to smuggle Joash, the infant son of Ahaziah, into the temple precincts, where he is hidden for six years.

The prophecy on Ahab descendants has been fulfilled. But God's promise that David's line would always have a king has also been satisfied.

We need to recognise that God's promises will be kept, even if it takes several generations.

"The Lord swore an oath to David If your sons keep my covenant Their sons shall sit on your throne for ever and ever."

Saturday 17th July

Psalm 89 : 25 – 33

2 Chronicles 24 : 17 – 25

For years, with the support and advice of the priest, Jehoida, Joash rules well and the land prospers. When Jehoida dies, Joash turns to the false gods that his forefathers had worshiped. The descendant of David has once again failed to stay true to God and no longer listens to the voice of his priests and prophets. The army of Aram is allowed to defeat the army of Judah and the foreigners start to take control of the country.

Beware! God is very patient, but evil deeds will bring their reward of punishment.

"If his sons forsake my law ...I will punish their sin But I will not take my love from him."

19th – 24th July *Compiled by Fr David Pycock (Associate Priest)*

Monday 19th July

Psalm 60 : 1-5, 11 - end

2 Kings 17 : 5 - 8, 13 - 15, 18

In your mind's eye travel to a distant time and place; to a place where war and fighting is commonplace. You are a person with no honours or special rights. You lived in Samaria but were carried away with the other Israelites to Assyria. What does it feel like to be in a strange land? Do you miss being able to go to the synagogue? Do you worship the foreign gods? How do you feel now about the warning messages of the prophets? The prophets urged you and all the Israelites in Samaria to return to the faith and worship of your forebears. Do you long to return to Samaria?

Spend some time with the difficult and perhaps mixed emotions of a displaced people, the displaced people of God.

Imagine being in modern day Samaria. How can you live in this land? Where do you hear the word of God, the prophets of this age? What do they say?

Imagine being in Israel, the promised land. Are you comfortable to be here? How can you live in this land? Where do you hear the word of God, the prophets of this age? What do they say?

Now return home and ask the same questions again. Is there anything that you wish to say to God? Stay a while and listen for God's response.

Tuesday 20th July

Psalm 48 : 1 - 2, 8 – end

2 Kings 19 : 9b – 11, 14 – 21, 31 - 36

Now imagine living in Jerusalem, under the protection of King Hezekiah. What is the pattern of your life? Have you heard how the Israelites of Samaria were taken to foreign lands? Perhaps you feel that this could never happen in Jerusalem. If so, why do you feel that it could never happen in Jerusalem? You hear a rumour that one of the Kings of Assyria has sent a messenger to Hezekiah threatening to overthrow the city. Are you pleased that Hezekiah went to the temple to pray, or do you think that he should have organised the defences of Jerusalem? The news comes back of a pre-emptive strike against the Assyrian army and the city is safe.

Imagine being in Jerusalem in the present day. There are people from foreign kingdoms all around. Does this feel like the kingdom of Israel? How do you feel about the forces of Palestine close by? Is it possible to live in peace? Does having a strong military presence bring peace? What do you wish to say to God? Stay a while and listen for God's response.

Return home to Birmingham. Where are the threats to a comfortable life? What do you wish to say to God about this and how does God respond to you?

Wednesday 21st July

Psalm 119 : 33 - 40

2 Kings 22 : 8 – 13, 23 : 1 - 3

Imagine that you are a servant in the household of King Josiah. You hear Shaphan read from the book of the law. How do you feel? Are you pleased that this book has been found? Do you feel that the people follow what is written in the book? How do you feel when the High Priest Hilkiah promises to follow all

the law written in the book of the covenant that has been found? King Josiah also promises before the people to follow this book of the law that has been found. Are you happy? Are you intimidated? Come back to Birmingham. How would you feel if a new covenant were made with God here and now? Would you be happy to follow this book of the law revealing God's love to everyone you see? Do you feel up to this?

Thursday 22nd July

Psalm 79 : 1 - 9, 12

2 Kings 24 : 8 - 17

There have been several new rulers of Israel since Josiah. Those rulers have not followed Josiah's lead; they have not followed the Law of Moses. Imagine being in Jerusalem, in this time, when King Nebuchadnezzar's forces besieged Jerusalem. The new King, Jehoiachin is 18 years old. He ruled for 3 months and did not follow the law of Moses either. You look on as the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar ransacked the King's House and the temple. King Jehoiachin surrendered his family and the elite of the land.

How do you feel now that Mattaniah, now called Zedekiah, rules on behalf of Nebuchadnezzar? All the treasures of Solomon have been taken and cut into pieces. Life goes on but Jerusalem is no longer a home for Israel, no longer the home of God's people. Is this a good judgement for the wayward rulers of recent years? Do you now follow the law of Moses as much as you are able?

Return to Birmingham. Is this a wayward city that fails to follow the law of Moses? How will this city and nation be called back to faith?

Friday 23rd July

Psalm 137 : 1 - 6

2 Kings 25 : 1 - 12

This is it. The final onslaught. King Nebuchadnezzar has come, and a servant of his household burned down the house of the Lord, the King of Judah's house, and laid to waste all the houses of Jerusalem. Imagine being carried off into exile. There is no point protesting. You are powerless and there is no shelter remaining.

Who in the modern day are in a similar position? Is it the people of Samaria, The Sudan, The Congo? What do you pray for those forcibly removed from their homes?

Saturday 24th July

Psalm 74 : 1 - 3, 21 - end

Lamentations 2 : 2, 10 - 14, 18 - 19

There is only one fitting response to the war faced by Jerusalem: a lament. In this passage Israel laments to God. This part of the lament ends with a cry to the Lord for mercy. This is a poetic writing, perhaps by Jeremiah. How would you cry to God in the present age? Do you feel that God has deserted his people? How do you think God might respond to a lament at this time? Are there things of which the world should repent? Listen for the voice of God.

The ministry team has been pleased to provide these meditations for well over a year now. It would be good to receive feedback and get some idea of how many people use them as providing them does take time and money and there are plenty of other bible reading notes available. Drop an e-mail to stlaurencechurchnorthfield@gmail.com