



March Team Ministry

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

Welcome

2nd Sunday after Trinity ~ 13th June June 2021

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

We are waiting for news on Monday which will tell us of any changes to be made from the 21st June.
We plan to continue to act to give safety and confidence; services with Social Distancing

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am
St Mary's Sundays 9.15am
St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Prayers

O God at whose bidding the seed will sprout and the shoot grow towards full stature, hear the prayer of your assembled people. Make us trust in your hidden ways, that we may pray with confidence and wait for your kingdom now growing in our midst. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, with the comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Lord of the misfit, whose prophets came like weeds to an ordered garden, shaking all that deadens your love: give us faith in your kingdom's growth, unruly and exuberant and let it be a shelter wide enough for all; through Jesus Christ, our teacher. **Amen**

1 Samuel 15 v34 - 16 v13

Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house in Gibeah of Saul. Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And the LORD was sorry that he had made Saul king over Israel.

The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.' Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.' And the LORD said, 'Take a heifer with you, and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD." Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.' Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, 'Do you come peaceably?' He said, 'Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.' And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD.' But

the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.' Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen any of these.' Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.' He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, 'Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.' Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Gospel of St Mark 4 v26--34

Such a large crowd gathered around Jesus that he began to teach them using many parables. Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.' Jesus also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

Meditation

We seem to have three successive weeks in which the Old Testament reading focussed on succession. Three weeks ago, after a period when the voice of God was not heard, we heard of God calling the child Samuel, and him getting the message that the old ways of Eli, the Judges and the shrine of the Ark of the Covenant were to be replaced by Samuel as the mouthpiece of God. Then, last week, we heard how a King was asked for, and eventually provided by Samuel. How this strong warrior King, Saul, would be the hope of Israel and the vehicle and way for God to guide his people. Now, this week, we hear how this King Saul is to be replaced. Saul has won and lost battles for Israel. He has displayed sound and unsound judgement over policies and lieutenants, but has become increasingly moody and unstable. Now, in response to God saying he is sorry that he ever asked Samuel to anoint Saul as King, so God asks Samuel to anoint another King even whilst Saul still lives and reigns.

There is a common and true maxim, that history is written by the victors, so we have in this account a clear line between God's intention and David's accession as King, but we can also legitimately see behind the story that there are court intrigues, plotting, and betrayal in the corridors of power as much as there are today – our news bulletins this last week have had their fair share of advisors, ministers, and mutual back stabbing and blame. Both then and now, there is a mixture of both personal ambition and manipulation of legacy and reputations with the need to survive, and also very genuine concern for responsible rule and perhaps fulfilling God's call.

With fear and a cunning plan, Samuel, having been convinced that he must choose another King to usurp Saul, travels to Bethlehem and greets the sons of Jesse in age order. The interview process for the new King; from the shortlist provided by God, of the sons of Jesse begins. Not the oldest, not the strongest, not the most attractive or impressive, not even the sons that are there presented as candidates, but the forgotten one, the youngest, a shepherd boy still wrestling with his identity, left out in the cold, who is deemed to have the heart for it. So Samuel anoints David, the Spirit of the Lord descends upon David; the rebellion has begun, the usurping started, the new regime launched. Surprise, surprise, it is the tender-hearted, young, musical shepherd boy who will be King.

Perhaps we have now finished the prequel to the main thrust of our Old Testament readings, for we have reached David and over the next weeks we will hear some of how he consolidates his power and rule. But it seems to me those who have chosen which excerpts we read on Sunday do not see David as the destination of our narrative or of God's purposes (and I would love it if we were able to read, on Sundays, some of the other stories of David's reign, maybe another time), but the destination is the creation of the Temple of YHWH on Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

I will not be tempted to rush to that conclusion, let's pause where we are in the narrative. Don't be surprised when people in, or having just left, the corridors of power, want to rewrite history. Don't be surprised when rulers make mistakes, and be delighted when they show they are learning from their experiences. Don't think that finding a new king, ruler, prime minister or even different system of government will suddenly deliver all solutions, fulfil aspirations and make dreams come true; but neither think these matters are indifferent to God and that he does not yearn for his people. Do be surprised at some of the people God does choose, and often look amongst the unlikely, the weakest and the smallest for ways forward. Don't be dispirited when things do not seem to work out, try different ways, be prepared to restart or go back to the drawing board, and, like God did, to express regret, and to move forward again with resilience.

The conclusion I will rush to, is that of the two parables of Jesus that Mark gives us today. The kingdom of God is like.....

+ When we scatter seed. What else could we do with seed? We could bake with it and either eat it or share it with others. But if we scatter it around, we will get far more to eat in time, and enough to scatter again and again.
+ We leave the seed to grow as we get up, and go to bed. What else could we do? We could poke and prod, weed, spray or fertilise. But if we are patient and give things time, something happens, and sometimes we have to let others, or God, nurture our cherished schemes. And sometimes we do not have to understand it to let it happen.
+ We can watch it grow and when the time comes, harvest. What else could we do? We could simply let it go to seed, and not play our part. We could harvest too soon, so the taste may be bitter. We could harvest too late, and mould will have destroyed its value. We could steal someone else's crop, or destroy ours to prevent others from benefitting. Or if we get it when it is ripe we can live, help others to live, and restart the cycle.

The kingdom of God is like.....

Something that starts so small you can hardly see it or find it, but ends up providing life, hospitality and shelter for life in abundance.

I pray that you will find the seeds of the Kingdom in your lives, and will do with them what is fruitful, recognise when to harvest and to leave, and remain protected in the shade of the fruits of the Kingdom, and pray that I may too. Amen.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

Blessed are those whose spirit has been shaped by poverty;
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who are sick at heart to see power abused;
for they shall be invited to the feast.
Blessed are those who are not arrogant;
for they shall inherit the earth,
Blessed are those who are desperate for justice;
for they shall eat and drink their fill.
Blessed are the compassionate;
for they shall have compassion shown to them when they need it.
Blessed are those who refuse to be corrupted;
for they shall not be afraid to come face to face with God.
Blessed are those who bring about peace;
for they shall truly be called God's own.
Blessed are those who carry wounds suffered in the struggle for justice;
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

O God you have made us creatures of this earth, hungry and thirsty and needy, that you might satisfy our longings with your abundant love. Satisfy the hunger of our bodies for food and shelter, health and human touch. Satisfy the needs of our spirits for dignity and freedom in giving and receiving. Satisfy the hunger of our minds to understand our world, the reasons for its pain, the ways we are connected to each other. Satisfy the hunger of our hearts that all who share this loving earth with us shall share our satisfaction. And satisfy the hunger of our hands to help us make it so, through Jesus Christ.

Amen