

Sermon 27 May 2018 Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6:1-8 and John 3:1-17

On Thursday night at PCC, Mark started the evening by asking us each to describe something that we had done for the very first time in the past few weeks. The answers were wide ranging, with a few cycling related ones, through to meditation and Mark's which was visiting Aberdaron, the church where the Welsh poet, R.S Thomas had been vicar. Our PCC has a broad age range and includes two members in their 80s who were able to find something new.

Which leads me to our reading from Isaiah. The first five chapters of Isaiah paint a picture of a nation that knows affluence but has turned its back on God, going through the motions of religion, while acquiring wealth through oppression. And yet, God intends that it should also become a centre of world blessing, following spiritual renewal. In Chapter 6, Isaiah has a vision of heaven which terrorises him, for he is aware that he is unfit to be in God's presence. He cannot praise God as the seraphs do. He is tainted through being a citizen of a nation that has turned away from God. Maybe though his confession of being unclean, where he says: I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips, maybe sets him apart from his fellow citizens and enables the forgiveness he receives. The burning coal that touches his lips symbolises the grace of God. The grace that God is longing to extend to the whole nation. And the reason that Isaiah's lips and mouth have been the focus for his sin, becomes apparent as God is looking for a messenger. Isaiah is transformed from someone who is fearful to someone who responds to God's call. Here am I, send me.

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Kathy a few weeks ago used as the theme of her sermon the simple words – we are not here by accident. You can, if you like, take those words and use the more biblical term – we are all called by God to something, we all have a vocation. And for most of us, that will mean nothing more than being the person we are and doing the things that we are already doing, with the understanding that we are doing it for God, that we have been chosen by God to be the person we are. Our daily altars and sacraments are made up of friends, family, colleagues, work, home, strangers, school gate, those who serve us, and those we serve. The world and our own small communities are the places where God is active, and we can join with God wherever we are. We can be God's person, for God's sake and live and work in God's name.

But you know, God doesn't just call us once and for all. He calls us many times over. Calling us to new challenges, putting us in new places, bringing us new people to get to know. And that's why I think Mark's question to the PCC on Thursday night was so profound. It encourages us to expect God to bring us new things to do, new things to experience. And I don't think that stops as we age. In many cases we find ourselves in new communities, with new freedoms or responsibilities. Many of us will uproot ourselves as we grow older – some just down the road – others halfway across the country or even across the world. Maybe to be closer to family members, maybe to be free of the responsibility of home ownership, Or we find our situations change as we no longer have the immediate hands on responsibility as parents or we find that becoming parents changes the framework of our lives. What is the next new thing God is calling us to? How are we to live and work in God's name?

How do we discern if there is a new call? We don't have to do that on our own, for God incorporates us as one body – so your eyes may spot something for me that I haven't seen. My ears might

overhear a conversation that makes me think about someone else's talents – each of us have eyes, ears, hearts, minds and voices to help us interpret God's call for our community and for each individual within it.

We may find that our daily reading of scripture points us in a new direction or gives us what we need for a particular moment. For the Bible is the story of God's relationship with his people. And it's not just a story of the past. Our God is also God of the present and of the future. The themes of the Bible keep recurring in our lives. And the familiar passages accumulate new meaning as we return to them again and again. They become something designed to meet me where I am at that particular moment.

This Friday morning I couldn't settle, I wanted to get on with a particular activity but it needed someone else to do something first. So I decided to sit down and immerse myself in a web based daily meditation, Bible reading and prayer called Sacred Space. Hoping it would calm me down and inspire me. For some reason the daily prayer for Friday wasn't loaded onto the site. So, huffing and puffing a bit, I pulled out the Anglican lectionary and looked at the prescribed readings for Friday. And the reading from James was about patience, just two verses, and it gave me plenty to chew over. But you know, although the prescribed reading was from James, the verses that had captured my attention weren't included in the lectionary. Maybe I need to go back to the optician. Whatever, by misreading the lectionary, I was given what I needed for the day. As things turned out, I needed every scrap of patience I could call upon. But by doing so, I found that people helped me. Had I been argumentative or defensive when things went wrong, I would probably have made those who were in a position to help me, argumentative or defensive themselves. For the person who needed to do something for me, before I could act, hadn't done it properly. I have no idea what impact the way I responded to that will have had on them. But I know that I was living and working at that point as God's person.

And Jesus, speaking to Nicodemus, affirms that God didn't send Jesus into the world to condemn the world, but did so in order that the world might be saved through him. God so loved the world. The work of Jesus is God at work. God saving the world. Why is this important? Because it means that God is on our side. Jesus came to earth not to change God's mind but to express God's mind. Jesus' ministry was one of reconciliation.

And our role, calling, purpose, is to look at Jesus, to see in him God's saving love and to trust in him.

Jesus talked about the spirit being like a wind. Well, maybe there will be times when we need to open the window and allow the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow through the tidiness of our lives and to disturb us, to show us the way God is joining earth and heaven in our little bit of the world, and to join him on the journey.

May we be encouraged to say to God, here am I, send me. May we be encouraged to be the person God has called us each to be, for we can't be someone else!

Amen

Sarah Thomas

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