

Dear friends,

I have recorded a YouTube reflection on Sunday's readings called "Honest to God" - Counting the cost of following Jesus and not expecting anything in return in this life. If you'd like to access that you can do so by just clicking on this link. <https://youtu.be/9hvT1ZNE7r8>

Alternatively if you'd prefer to read it, you can do so on my Blog by clicking here; <https://revmartinjacques.blogspot.com/2020/08/honest-to-god.html>

Filmed services

Just to correct any misunderstanding - any filmed services are *not instead of* live services but are in *addition* to what we normally offer and they will be a window into our church community for the benefit of insiders and outsiders alike on various social media. Our first one will be a Harvest festival service I have put together and I have invited input from certain people in All Saints and St. Michael's churches and those individuals have already agreed. Filming will start soon but we have never done this before so please be patient!

Curious facts about the Psalms.

The psalms are a treasure trove of material and dating them throws up lots of challenges. Although attributed by tradition to King David (circa 1000 BC) one has to wrestle with the fact that psalm 137 "By the rivers of Babylon" knows about the Babylonian exile which was 400 years after David died and psalm 104 is very akin the "hymn to the Aten" written by Pharaoh Akhenaten (1370 BC) and psalm 29 has been found written on a clay tablet at Ugarit in Syria and was originally a Canaanite hymn of praise to Baal which the Israelites obviously liked and re-dedicated to God and therefore qualifies as probably the oldest psalm we have.

Another curiosity is that psalm 14 and 53 are exactly the same psalm. Perhaps this points to them originally being part of two separate collections of psalms which were brought together in the Bible and the same psalm was in each collection?

Dating and authorship aside, as a collection they are unrivalled and have been called the "Bible in miniature" and have even been divided into five parts mirroring the "Torah" – the first five books of the Bible.

Psalms 120 – 134 are known collectively as the “Songs of ascent” and were to be sung by Israelite pilgrims as they made their pilgrimage to the Temple in Jerusalem because people had to “ascend” to Jerusalem as it is situated quite high up in comparison to the surrounding country.

Some psalms are preceded by dedications to various characters and amongst them Asaph and Korah who are both mentioned in 1 Chronicles 25 and 26 and were probably choral singers in the Temple.

Psalms 1 and 2 are untitled and form a kind of introduction to everything that follows. It is thought they probably come from a coronation service for Israelite Kings.

I hope you have enjoyed this quick romp through the psalms pointing out some of the curiosities. It seems fitting to end with one and having already mentioned that psalm 29 is a re-dedication to God of a psalm originally written in praise of the nature God Baal by the Canaanites and so is a candidate for the oldest psalm in existence. Notice the nature imagery that courses through the psalm now directed towards Yahweh, the God of all creation and ascribed to David.

Psalm 29

A Psalm of David.

- ¹ Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings,^[a]
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- ² Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name;
worship the Lord in holy splendour.
- ³ The voice of the Lord is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over mighty waters.
- ⁴ The voice of the Lord is powerful;
the voice of the Lord is full of majesty.
- ⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars;
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
- ⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Sirion like a young wild ox.
- ⁷ The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.
- ⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness;
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

- ⁹ The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl,^[b]
and strips the forest bare;
and in his temple all say, 'Glory!'
- ¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned over the flood;
the Lord sits enthroned as king for ever.
- ¹¹ May the Lord give strength to his people!
May the Lord bless his people with peace!

The prayer for Today is from the Celtic tradition which also makes great use of nature imagery. Sometimes dismissed as being too touchy-feely by some critics as opposed to what supporters in return would describe as a too straight-laced orthodoxy, the tradition produces things of great beauty like this blessing;

**Eternal God, creator and Father of us all,
We thank you for this wonderful world,
For the ever changing skies,
The blessed winds and the earth beneath our feet.
And we thank you that your Son gave all of this life's loveliness
In sacrifice for us.
In our turn, and in great humility, we offer our lives.
And all that we do and all that we say we give in joyful
And willing service to you,
Our Lord and heavenly King. Amen**

Love and peace,
Martin

Please note my new email address is vicar@rmcommunity.co.uk