

Dear friends,

Sunday was one of those rare days when I only had one service to cover in the morning and this was at All Saints. There were fun and games before the service because a chunk of the ceiling had fallen down creating a right old mess on the chancel steps, but swift action and team work got everything ship shape before the service started.

**That there** was only one service to cover was fortuitous because there has been another medical calamity in Louise's family when another brother, Matthew, has needed a huge tumour removed from his bowel. It was touch and go, as you might imagine but having just one service allowed us to travel to London to see him in the intensive care unit in Kingston as visiting hours are only from 12noon to 5pm. I can report that Matthew is making good progress, although very weak and a bit confused from time to time.

**Sunday 14th September – Trinity 13 – Proper 19.**

I will be presiding at the 8am service at St. Peter's and then the 9.30am at All Saints and the 11am at St. Michael's. I will also take the Choral Evensong at 6pm. Ken Parry will preside at the 10am at St. Peter's.

**Exodus 32: 7-14.** Another instance of Abraham bargaining with God and imploring him not to consume the people of Israel – and he did it – he changed God's mind according to the scripture at any rate (What are friends for?). We can take Moses at face value who implores God that he shouldn't destroy Israel, who are the descendants of Abraham in order to favour Moses.

**1 Timothy 1. 12-17.** It is easy to forget that St. Paul, who we revere and pour over his letters was in his own words a blasphemer, a persecutor and a man of violence. He was ignorant and an unbeliever. He puts his conversion down to being exposed to (baptised in) God's Grace which disarmed him and he became a true believer and the finest evangelist the church has ever seen. Amazing Grace indeed.

**Luke 15: 1-10.** Two parables, one after the other that are meant to convey the extreme joy God feels when even one sinner see the light and converts his life to serving God and his fellow man. Not only does God forgive him but ordinary men and women must forgive him, no matter how evil he had been. One is reminded of St. Paul yet again. It must have been hard for people to treat his conversion as real after he had been an active persecutor of the church.

**Thought for the Day**

I have a photo on my side table in the dining room of me, my dog, my mum and dad, my first wife Alex and my mother and Father-in law. I am the only one still alive in that photo and it serves as a powerful reminder of the passing of time and how everything is in a constant state of flux.

Recent medical disasters that have befallen Louise's family serve to teach us that nothing is guaranteed in this life and the light at the end of the tunnel might just be an express train about to mow you down.

Theologically they are a massive challenge and a major reason why people lose their faith. But when you think about it, Jesus never promises us a safe, happy, prosperous life. Quite the reverse in fact. Jesus promises us that in this life we will have trouble.

But he also assures us that He has overcome the world. No matter what befalls us, whether good or bad, the choice of how to react to them lies with us. Either we sink into despair and believe that there is no God, thus impoverishing our already desperate situation or we can rejoice that Salvation is ours and that Christ's bloodied and bruised body stands next to us and we can commune with Him spiritually at any time and sacramentally in the Eucharist.

I have given much time recently contemplating the notion of a suffering and sacrificed God and meditated on just how counter intuitive and strange this is. We quite naturally want to spend much more time contemplating the risen and glorious saviour – Christ the king, but we only get there by acknowledging the flogging, humiliation, suffering and death of an innocent man.

If it can happen to the son of God, why should I expect to be exempt? It is always the case, that when disaster strikes, it is not so much a case of why me, but why not me? This is a bitter pill to swallow when life seems to close in around you and all seems hopeless. But it only seems hopeless temporarily when you have faith. Our hope is in Jesus Christ who overcame the world. He went to Hell and back for all of us. Thanks be to God.

**The Prayer for Today** is by Rabindranath Tagore.

**Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers**

**But to be fearless in facing them.**

**Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain**

**But for the heart to conquer it.**

**Let me not look for allies in Life's battlefield**

**But to my own strength.**

**Let me not crave in anxious fear to be saved,**

**But hope for patience to win my freedom.**

**Sarvanangalam!**

**Blessings to all!**

Love and peace,

Martin