



St Peter's Parish

e-newsletter

15th April 2020

www.stpeterrealing.org.uk

The Vicar's Letter

Alleluia! Christ is Risen. He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!

Easter has arrived. Somewhat unusually admittedly. The unusualness though is really in us. In what we have not been able to do. The rituals, the family traditions, the Easter routines that make up Easter as we know and love it. I guess though we have either found ways to complete those personal things or even created new ones, new rituals, new patterns and new traditions which have still allowed us to reflect this special time.

I missed so much of what we do that makes Easter special for me. I missed the gathering of the Diocesan clergy at St Paul's cathedral for the annual Chrism Mass. I missed beginning the Triduum with foot washing and the watch vigil. I missed walking with fellow Christians from across the borough through central Ealing. I missed the quiet reflections of Good Friday; the anticipation of the Dawn Mass and the vibrant celebrations of the Easter Mass.

Then, as we gathered with the help of technology to celebrate all this, to travel together differently from the Upper Room, along the Via Delarosa, to Golgotha, the borrowed tomb and the glorious early morning garden, was what was truly important was already there: the Word of God and God's people. It was such a delight to see you all and to be able to share with you. To share with you in the story of salvation; to journey with you as we followed the way of Jesus. We may not have physically washed feet but we shared in Jesus' washing of his disciples feet. We may not have had the glorious, lily filled altar of repose, we still waited with Jesus as we watched in the garden. We couldn't gather in worship on Good Friday, we did gather at the foot of the cross with Mary and John to share in the darkest of hours.

And then...and then at Easter we celebrated as together we watched the Sun rise on what was to be a most glorious Easter morning. we may not have stood together around the Easter Garden, been sprinkled with the water of blessing, made a glorious noise together at the singing of the Gloria or reached out our hands to receive the blessed sacrament, but together we did proclaim loud and clear, "He is Risen indeed. Alleluia!"

Easter was and continues to be unusual this year. Yet in us it is the same today, yesterday and for ever – Christ Jesus rose from the dead setting us free from sin and death so that we might proclaim him Lord.

St Peters Pastoral Assistance Programme.

Members have volunteered to shop, chat on the phone or collect prescriptions. Margaret Joachim is co-ordinating this and if you'd like to help, if you know someone who could do with some help or indeed if you yourself need help then get in touch. The phone number to use is 07595 911178.

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We have suggested you might like to contact your neighbours, if you haven't already, and may be wondering what you can say. Here are some words you might find helpful. Pop them on a card or a notelet and pass it through their doors. Better still, if you can, send an email:

Dear Friend,

As the UK faces the impact of coronavirus, St Peter's has set up a support network for people in our congregation and others in the parish, so that we can shop, collect medicine, run errands or provide a listening ear for each other, especially if whole households will need to self-isolate.

*If you need anything, please feel free to contact us on the number below. It could be to buy and drop off some shopping that you need, or post a letter, or simply for a friendly chat on the phone. We can leave shopping** on your front doorstep and ring you to let you know it's arrived. It's no trouble at all.*

If people are already helping you, that's splendid. We are particularly concerned to contact and help people who are alone and don't already have friends or family to help them – especially if they are also elderly and less likely to use websites or social media. So please tell your neighbours about this, and anyone else that you think would find it helpful.

*** By the way – we can't guarantee to find everything you might want in the shops just at the moment, but we'll do our best*

Please also note the new Ealing Borough website: <https://ealingtogether.org/> Loads of information help and advice is there.

Finding your Way round your Bible: History I

As we move into the History section, our first impressions might be that the whole bookshop is dominated by History. This is because almost all of the books have some historical content. Before we go deeper into our imaginary bookshop, it might be helpful to first have a grasp of what kind of history it is that we are looking at. This makes this week's trip a bit longer of preamble, but hopefully sets us up for some brisker visits later.

On my own –real – bookshelf here at home I have a book called *The Bible as History*. It was written in the 1950s and boasts on its cover, "Archaeology confirms the Book of Books." The German author, Dr Werner Keller, brings together the dating and descriptions given the Bible and puts them alongside recent archaeological findings. There are chapters on the Flood, on the wanderings of the Children of Israel, the conquest of Canaan, on the kingdoms of David and Solomon, as well as on New Testament people and sites.

Dr Keller's book contains some fascinating and convincing correlations between biblical accounts, archaeological investigation and other Near Eastern records, proving many of the Bible accounts to be reliable. For all this, important as it is, it remains the case that much of the history contained in our Bibles is only found there; confirmatory archaeology and records have yet to be discovered.

Why does this matter? Well, because of two contradictory and equally unhelpful ways of seeing biblical history:

- 1) Every single word, fact and date is accurate.
- 2) Every single word, fact and date is made up.

It will help us very much as we approach the Bible's History books to find a place to stand in this. For previous generations, the question would not have been, "Is it accurate or is it made up?" but, "Is it true?"

Joshua to the end of Esther (quite a handful of pages in our Bibles) covers the period of time in the story of the Jewish people from the death of Moses (c 1400 BC) through various

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major ups and down to the return to Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile (c 540 BC) – though it much of was actually written down a bit later than this.

In this thousand years, the Jewish people move from being captives of the Egyptians, wandering tribesmen, warriors, settled people, subjects of great kings, factions in a divided kingdom, to being captives again, first of the Assyrians then the Babylonians. This is the human history of those years. As we saw from the Law department, though, this is not the real story being told. The real story is: God at work in human history. It is what God is doing that the writers of the Bible are most concerned with, the characters and situations in which God is seen to act are only important in so far as they show God at work.

So, a question which might really interest us, did Joshua really win the Battle of Jericho by blowing down the wall with trumpets? (Joshua 6 verse 20) is not the key question for the writers of the book of Joshua. The key question is, did God fulfil his promise that he would be with Joshua in the conquest of Canaan? (Deuteronomy 31 verse 23). The answer to that is a resounding, “Yes – it’s true.”

We, as readers, are bound to get caught up in the detail, and there are some very richly detailed accounts here. We must bear in mind that though each writer might well be using oral accounts, received tradition, eye-witness statements– adding his own flourishes – the point is always to show what God is doing in all this.

It is with that firmly in mind that we turn to the books immediately after Deuteronomy. We will not travel very far today, just into Joshua and Judges.

One more thing, it would be really good to have a map of Israel in Canaan, as the action moves around quite a lot. Try <https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/division-of-promised-land-to-twelve-tribes-israel.html>

Joshua is not good bedtime reading for the sensitive. A great many battles take place, many are slain and many Canaanites are punished for not falling in line with the invading Israelites’ agenda. What we know about Canaan before the Israelites claimed it is limited. The victors, in this case the Israelites, have told its story. Dark tales of human-sacrifice and ritual immorality are the background to much of the understanding that Canaan is not simply a land-grab by the Children of Israel, but a purging of foreign and defiling gods and ways. Baal, Asherah and Moloch are the ones we know most about.

Although the area of territory is not large, it was populated by many kings and their distinctive peoples. Look at Joshua 12 verses 8 -24, for their deeply evocative names and places –“the king of Jokneam in Carmel...the king of Goyim in Galilee.” All vanquished and distributed instead to the tribes of Judah, Dan, Levi et al.

Some other sections you might want to linger in if you do not want a blow by blow experience are:

- Early James Bonds?: Joshua 2 verses 1-24 and then Joshua 6 verses 22- 25
- Joshua “fit” the Battle of Jericho: Joshua 6 verses 1 -21
- The Day the Sun Stood Still: Joshua 10 verses 1 -15. (NB The Book of Jashar reference here leads to an interesting Wikipedia wormhole!)
- Benjaminland: Joshua 18 verse 11 - 28. (Read all this geography too quickly and you might miss a reference to an insignificant little place that is soon going to have lasting centre stage.)

Joshua, the man, is the person God entrusts with establishing and settling the tribes of Israel in the Promised Land. Joshua, the book, ends with that conquest incomplete.

Judges, the book, takes up the tale, but there is a change of mood. Joshua’s death is recorded in the second chapter, and that of his own and the next generation – and then comes this:

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“Another generation grew up after them , *who did not know the Lord or the work he had done for Israel*” (Judges 2 verse 10 my italics)

We are then launched into descriptions of the Children of Israel worshipping the Canaanite gods and generally falling from the way God has planned for them. The Judges of the title are the political and spiritual leaders of the Israelites at this time, trying and failing to a greater or lesser extent to remind them of God’s will. There are some great stories and descriptions here. If you do not read the whole book, then do try to meet the following Judges:

- Ehud (if you have a strong stomach...): Judges 3 verses 12 – 30
- Deborah (and Jael, also not for the squeamish): Judges 4 verses 4 – 22
- Gideon: Judges 6 verse 11 to 8 verse 35 (this is his whole story, for just his fleece see Judges 6 verses 36 – 40)
- Jephthah (this is a tragic story and one which artists, writers and ordinary readers have wrestled with over the centuries) Judges 11 verses 29 -40
- Samson: Judges 13 verse 1 to 16 verse 31 (again, this is his whole story, for just his time with Delilah see Judges 16 verses 1- 22)

Additionally you might enjoy The Parable of the Trees, (Judges 9 verses 8 -15). This is a very “telling” tale, because it is about what is going to happen next in the history of the Jewish people. The parable describes the trees trying to decide who should be their king.

Behind all the comings and goings of Judges, has been this growing theme: The Children of Israel are dissatisfied with God’s will. They prefer the soft-living immorality of the Baals, (for a genuinely disturbing insight into this you can read Judges 19), to the demands of the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. They look around them, at the enemies who are clawing back the conquered land, and remember that list of kings in Joshua 12. The book of Judges ends like this:

“In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes.” (Judges 20 verse 25)

Next time we will find out what God thinks about this and about kings.

Susan Peatfield

Quiz – week 3

Here’s the next instalment in Margaret’s ‘devilish’ quiz. Hope the questions are helping keep you entertained.

1. What did some Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Judeans, Cappadocians, Cretans and Arabs have in common, and who else were there?
2. In what context might you properly come across a brazier, a pheon, a horse-bray, an arbalest, and a rere-mouse, though possibly not close together?
3. One and a half led to death, one came from Royston Vasey, one was founded in 1888 with twelve components, and 20K were sub-marine. What is this?
4. Where in the countryside might a Ladybird find three items for a good night's sleep on a comfortable bed, plus the bed itself, and what might she use, perhaps from an animal tender, to pay for it?
5. Place the following in descending order: OO, N, HO, I, TT, O
6. How would you treat the:
 - o Qattara depression
 - o Burning Ghats
 - o Great Wen
 - o Bishop’s Finger
 - o Cat’s paw (two answers)

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Answers to Quiz 2

1. Their national flags are red, white and blue.
2. The rich attorney's elderly, ugly daughter (Trial by Jury), Katisha (The Mikado), Lady Jane (Patience), Dame Carruthers (The Yeomen of the Guard), Little Buttercup (HMS Pinafore), Mad Margaret (Ruddigore). They are all elderly ladies in Gilbert and Sullivan operas.
3. The River Ouse (they are its tributaries).
4. i.e. 'Yes I can' (the question was 'I wonder if you can read this', written in semaphore).
5. In a music shop (for example) as it is a stringed instrument and a kitchen utensil for slicing vegetables,
in the garden shed, for making holes to plant seeds,
in a hospital, a mask to wear to avoid infection,
in a laboratory, for cultivating bacteria and a geologist's pocket, for identifying minerals,
in a stamp album (if you were very lucky), sell it for a lot of money as it was the first Indian stamp.
6. Jacob, who manipulated his father-in-law Laban's flocks by selective breeding, ensuring that all the striped and spotted sheep and goats (which were to be his) were the strongest animals. Genesis 30, 32-43.

Clap for our Carers: Thursday 16th April at 8pm <https://clapforourcarers.co.uk/>

Worship update.

Zoom continues to go well. we tried some singing this week and it seemed to go ok (at least when the vicar could get in tune!). A very kind member of the congregation provided piano accompaniment to a couple of the hymns (thank fully!!). if you are struggling to Zoom then do let us know. Margaret is getting very good at telephone tutorials.

This week is a little quieter.

Monday – Friday 9.30pm Compline

Sunday 19th Main Sunday Worship at 10am.

There has been a hiccup with this. Fr David sent out a link to worship every Sunday from 19th through to the end of May. He is not going to join us this Sunday which causes a small problem. Please ignore his Zoom booking for this Sunday (19th). Margaret will send out a new one for this Sunday only as she will be the host.

Hope that all makes sense.

You can download Zoom onto your device or you can call in by phone, dialling the number given in the email. You will also need to have downloaded the Daily Prayer app onto you device or find it via the Church of England website (www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer)

Music suggestions:

Inspired by Alison Germany's suggestion Rosanna Fullerton has sent the following:

"Inspired by Alison I offer a couple of pieces of music for a Newsletter. These bring some of my childhood heritage into the mix.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGkELcsOAR0> - Soweto Gospel Choir - A place in

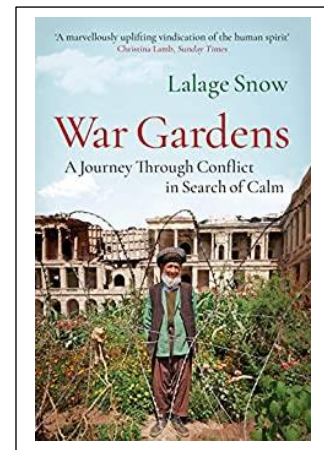
heaven. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7f5cevDigI> – The Lord's prayer – African Sanctus – David Fanshaw. (this on my computer is not as good as the original. This has the African lament, which for me makes it so beautiful, which some versions don't)

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A Book Review:

War Garden by Lalage Snow.

This is an interesting book written by a photographic war correspondent about gardens. Whilst working in Kabul in 2012 Lalage had her first introduction to Eden by an army commander. General Shirin Shah, in Camp Shorobaqk was scandalised when Lalage's response to the question what have you seen of Afghanistan replied only Helmand Province. Determined she should see something else of the Afghan heart he showed her his garden in the camp. Here began a project that took Lalage through war torn areas of the world looking at the place of gardens in the lives of those caught up in the violence. I thought it a great book offering signs of hope even in the darkest of corners in our world. She shows how gardening touches those who struggle to remain human in a dehumanising situation. The book shows us a side of conflict we easily miss. This is not a gardening book, it is a book about people, surviving, who love to garden. We would love to hear about the books you are reading.



Prayer requests:

Please pray for: Suzi; Cicely Pratt; Elaine Dunkley; Keith Win;
John Pullan.
Recently deceased: Peter Tilly; Sarah Bailey
Those we can't be with now and weigh heavy on our hearts.
Carers and health workers; those keeping supplies lines operational
Each other and ourselves.
(if you'd like names added to this list please send them to Fr David)

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious,
be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

This quotation from the writings of Thomas Merton keeps popping up so I print it again here. Seems appropriate for the times:

You do not need to know precisely what is happening,
or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to
recognise the possibilities and challenges offered
by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage,
faith and hope.

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