

St Peter's, Ealing  
Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2017  
Second Sunday after Trinity

## Why should they listen to us?

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Opening Prayer: Faithful Creator,  
Whose mercy never fails;  
Deepen our faithfulness in you  
And to your living Word  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

If you hadn't noticed this weekend is the Glastonbury Festival. And even if you have never been I would be most surprised if you didn't know what it is. In fact I am pretty certain you are all desperately upset you couldn't get a ticket this year.

Hundreds of thousands of people will be gathering in fields over this weekend, on a site covering three square miles, to engage in modern, artistic, popular culture. They will listen to music, both modern and not so modern – Radiohead played Friday evening and sang some of their classics from over twenty years ago. I listened to Elbow who again played many of their classics from their first album. The concert goers will listen to poets, visit alternative healing and wellbeing sessions, try different foods, experience different life styles, go to raves and explore different approaches to faith.

As I sat and listened to some of the artists on tv I wondered if any of the festival goers would have the opportunity to explore Christianity or if Christianity had anything to offer the festival goers. There is plenty of alternative stuff to engage with. The Healing Field, The Peace Garden where the Dalai Lama visited a couple of years ago. There are tents focusing on nature and what we might want to term more active creation exploration and spiritualities linked to it. On the website lots of the other, less musical areas and tents introduce and explain themselves in interesting quasi spiritual language, expressing eternal characteristics or engagement with that which is greater than ourselves. Some attempting to separate you from your money no doubt, but others reflecting a spiritual heart reaching out to searchers and seekers and explores.

You may be surprised to know the church is there at Glastonbury each year. Known as Sanctuary, space is provided by churches from across the South West offering comfort, a listening ear, safety and if necessary a place to sleep. Offered 24 hours a day during the festival Christians are there not necessarily to preach the gospel but to provide sanctuary in a space where prayers are said twice a day and Mass is celebrated on Sunday. Along with Sanctuary the Iona Community, whom some of us visited in 2015 on the Isle of Iona, have a creative presence too, offering an alternative view of Christianity emphasising its concerns for the environment and social issues whilst offering worship, comfort and pastoral care to those who need, it.

I wonder how these places and presences are received; how those who help approach or are approached but what might to seem an alien cultural setting. We might feel something of Jeremiah's in trepidation in our opening verse today:

“O Lord, you have enticed me,  
And I was enticed.  
You have overpowered me,  
And you have prevailed.  
I have become a laughing stock,  
All day long; everyone mocks me.”

Jeremiah is full of God. He is so full, he has been so enticed in to God that if he doesn't speak of God he will burst, “I am weary with holding it in and I cannot.” Jeremiah knows he will be ridiculed all day long but he can't help himself. Although he knows this to be the case he can't help but say, “Sing to the Lord; praise the Lord!”

The temptation for us ordinary-bod-type Christians is to knuckle under and get on with our daily life. After all that's what puts bread on the table and clothes on our backs. But is that how we are to fulfil our baptismal promise? Paul challenges us to think again. He asks, have we not died to our old ways, our old selves if through baptism we have died with Christ. In baptism, we have been changed and we are now a new creation; we have been crucified with Jesus and now must consider ourselves alive with Christ.

Jesus tells us in Matthews Gospel reading today, “Everyone who acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven.” Jesus came to bring change and he recognises such change has its price. Such changes come from our baptism, our commitment, our acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour; even if we are laughing stock and mocked. That is our commission.

Sanctuary and Iona have kept a place in what is possibly the most famous cultural event of the year. I wonder as festival goers wander around the vast sight, what they make of those Christians being there. There will be mixed reactions, mixed views. Maybe, carrying out their baptismal imperative and the passion with which their care is offered, they are able to share the changing renewing power of the Holy Spirit.

Surely their actions and the actions of many other Christians like them who work within the context of modern culture, seeking to offer solace and comfort and support, ask questions of us, the parish churches throughout the country and not just St Peters in Ealing, how we might live out our baptismal promises, how we might show the change the Holy Spirit has wrought in us. Challenging us with the question: how might we engage with the world offering change and renewal in the loving power of God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.