

St Peter's Ealing

Sunday 19th July 2015

Trinity 7 YrB: Jeremiah 23.1-6; Ephesians 2.11-22; Mark 6.30-34, 53-56

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest” Mk 6.31

I think we can safely say the holiday season has arrived. The schools have broken up, well most of them anyway; holidays that have been booked for months are now being packed for and if they are not being packed for just yet the lists are being drawn up in readiness to make sure nothing vital is forgotten. Even if you are not yet going on holiday or are not going away this season you will at least appreciate the change of air around us. When we get up in the morning there is less of a sense of rush, hustle and bustle; there are no convoys of cars dropping children to school; no phalanxes of workers trundling or even rushing towards the tube station. Everything seems that little bit more relaxed; no meetings, no rushing around. If you are still in doubt about the holidays arriving, come over to Montpelier Park after the service and join in with the Junior Church End of Term games and picnic - they'll probably have finished the rough and tumble games by then and food will be served.

Ah....the holidays. In many ways this seems quite a frivolous time. Taking time off work or school, away from the daily norm, to enjoy oneself. It is a bit of a luxury. Maybe for the first day or two we might feel a little self-conscious even guilty; almost feeling as if we were playing truant; that perhaps we should be doing something more serious, more important. We should be using our time more wisely and creatively. The more pressured of us may even use the first few days of our holidays to ‘clear those few bits of work I’ve been meaning to do’ or just clear those odd emails”. There speaks the Protestant work ethic; Calvinism writ large. I want to suggest though that this isn’t really very Christian.

Our gospel reading today has Jesus taking his disciples off for a holiday, for a well-earned break from the rigours of life, for them from the pressures of ministry. We know there were pressures; we are told in the passage there wasn’t even time to eat (v.31). The disciples had returned from their first foray into the mission field and they were buzzing. They were full of it – all the excitement and enthusiasm that comes from being part of and fulfilled by answering the call of God to preach and teach and heal in God’s name. Although they were probably high as kites the disciples would have been exhausted. As they return home they are immediately confronted with the work of the mission field there, all the pressures and work that was being carried out around Jesus, the mission field at home. Jesus is fully aware the disciples needed a break. Like a good shepherd he is caring for his flock. In caring for them he takes them away to a quiet place where they can recharge their batteries,

where they can be physically and spirituality refreshed, he takes them on a well-earned break. The shepherd requires his sheep to rest.

At Morning Prayer on Wednesday's in ordinary time we get to read Psalm 8 as our opening canticle. In this psalm the psalmist is full of wonder at the hand of God throughout creation. The power God shows in what he has created. Having recognised the breadth and wonder of Gods hand throughout all creation, the huge and awesome magnificence that surrounds us, the psalmist is in wonder of God's care for us; "What are mortals that you should be mindful of them; mere human beings that you should seek them out?" the psalmist ends by saying "O Lord our governor, how glorious is your name in all the world".

This week I suppose having the news from NASA and the New Horizons mission and the amazing photographs of the surface of Pluto, the new discoveries being made daily from the material transmitted back to earth, all those billions of miles, I was struck particularly by the line in the psalm: "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have ordained."

The psalmist is mindful of the enormity and wonder of God. The psalmist has taken time to sit and think and reflect on God, the universe, the insignificance of humanity, and a humanity that is still blessed by God and entrusted with the care of creation.

This left me wondering when then do we get or take time to share in these reflections for ourselves. This is where down time has its place. When we get off the treadmill, slow down, smell the flowers and consider the wonder of life. If this is what God wants for us then holidays cease to be a luxury and become a necessity. They become that opportunity for down time when we can stop and think and reflect. This is time for family and friends, to be with the children and the grandchildren, time for those we love, for play and for sleep, to do frivolous things and be refreshed. It should also be a time when we can acknowledge God, resting in God's presence and reflecting on the wonder of God's creation.