

St Peter's, Ealing
Sunday 5th July 2020
Trinity 4 YrA

Come to me, all that are weary and carrying heavy burdens.

I am sure as the weeks progress we are going to hear lots of name calling and blame placing. Already Government has been blamed for not shutting down sooner. Public Health England has been blamed for not giving quicker and clearer advice to Government so that lockdown could have happened sooner. Different scientists have been blamed for not giving more decisive advice to Public Health England to give to the Government...and so it goes.

In amongst this are elements of anger, fear, collusion, timidity and a need for answers. Rather than get answers we are offered name calling and shouting across the marketplace.

This reaction probably says a lot about us. Jesus asks, "To what will I compare this generation?". It is a good question. we can sense in this reading something of Jesus' frustration at those around him, judging him, questioning him, baiting him. He knows they only want to find fault – John could not get it right and now Jesus cannot either. In both cases they are criticised and questioned because their words challenge the listener. The words of Jesus and John challenged authorities and social norms, making people uncomfortable and defensive.

The reading today from Zechariah is a prophetic image with two interpretations. The first an image of the authority of Israel's King, enthroned in power, bringing peace to a troubled and embattled land. The second is of God, King of Israel, who will usher in a new kingdom; a kingdom that brings an end to war and a time of peace, freedom and hope.

Psalms 145 builds on this prophetic image of God as ruler over all, describing what God is like, what kind of king and therefore what quality of rule can be expected. In this psalm God is gracious and full of compassion. God is a loving King who is slow to anger. It is in the knowledge of this beneficent character

that all creation can give praise and honour and glory in this everlasting kingdom, enduring throughout all ages.

Such a kingdom is of the here and now as well as the yet to come. It is eschatological and therefore directs the nature and character of its inhabitants in the present moment.

Paul recognises the tension and struggle the faithful have in following the way of God. On one level we know how and why we should follow God. In Paul's view we have had the law, pointing our way to God. Our will draws us into a different direction, that of sin and death. Our will is the way of mortality and flesh not the way of the eternal kingdom and the way of God. We know this yet we shout out, "Its not may fault sir, they made me do it." We pass the blame onto others and become those children in the marketplace of Jesus' frustration.

In the present season our faith is being tested and many things have attempted to separate us from the kingdom of God. we may be tempted to join in the criticism of the authorities or to blame our neighbours or point at others. Does that do us any good? Does that proclaim the kingdom of God? Complaining might bring momentary relief for our frustration or vent our anger; it will not change the world; or witness to the love of God. Our name calling and blame placing will not make things better or bring back the dead.

In the eternal kingdom these things, in a way, do not matter. Events have happened and decisions have been made and we move on, wiser and better prepared hopefully, but we move on.

Our chief concern should be our part in the eternal kingdom full of hope, healing, justice and love. In this kingdom we are relieved of our heavy burden of worldly frustration. We are given a new yoke, a new responsibility. Rather than being heavy and burdensome, this is light and love for as Paul says, "Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The power and wonder of the Cross and the Empty Tomb, the promise and reality of the eternal kingdom where Jesus reigns at God's right hand, is here and now. Being here, together, in this place is a vital witness that truth. In the

eucharist heaven and earth meet, the truth of Jesus' presence with us is made real in broken bread and outpoured wine and we are fed with the holy food of God's word and sacrament. We witness to that kingdom which begins in the here and now, in this very moment. We are reminded of the eternal kingdom of which we are members, where Jesus Christ reigns in our hearts, where the Holy Spirit guides us in all wisdom and truth. This is where, gathered as God's people, witnessing to God's love in our lives, we lay down our heavy burdens of the woes of the world and take up the light burden of the Jesus for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. The burden is light because we no longer dance to the tune of the children in the market place but follow the truth of the good news of Jesus.