

Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May: Psalms 93; 96; 97; Deuteronomy 31:1-13; I John 2:18-end



*'Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.'*

How often do we need to be reminded to be strong and courageous, that the Lord goes with us? These words are words I come back to time and time again, normally reflecting on the first chapter of Joshua.

I remember, sitting in a bleak little room, having arrived for my selection conference at London Colney, feeling more than a little wobbly and wondering what on earth I was doing there and how I was going to survive the next few days when the phone rang, it was my mum, who simply said – read Joshua 1:9 and so, being the dutiful daughter I am, I did and it was these words we have heard again from Deuteronomy today, words reminding me to be strong and courageous, because God is with me wherever I go.

These were the words I needed to hear, these were the words that settled me down, that gave me the confidence to face the next few days, days which have shaped the course of the rest of my life.

Joshua of course, is on the brink of taking the Israelites into the Promised Land, he doesn't know the trials he may be facing. We may not be in quite the same situation, and certainly, I hope are not being called to drive out the nations before us. But nonetheless, we face our own challenges, our own wobbles and so need to be reminded from time to time, that we don't need to be afraid or terrified, but rather we need to trust in the God who journeys with us.

Today, we see another relaxation in some of the Coronavirus restrictions, for many this is cause for great celebration as greater freedoms are being offered. But there are also many people who are feeling anxious and afraid, for whom the last 15 months of change and uncertainty have left an underlying anxiety about the future. As we begin to enjoy the new freedoms that today brings and look forward to the changes we hope to see in June, let us be gentle with one another. Recognising each other fears and anxieties. And let us all remember that wherever we are, wherever we go, God goes with us.

Let us be strong and courageous, whilst taking care and being sensitive to the needs of those around us.

May God bless you

Heather

## Daily reflection for Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021

**Psalm 106      1 Samuel 10: 1-10      1Corinthians 12: 1-13**

During the 10 days between Ascension Day and Pentecost, the daily lectionary provides some alternative readings, so these are the ones I have focussed on today.

Psalm 106 is another psalm reminding the people of Israel how God remained faithful to them during their long history, when they were frequently unfaithful. God continued to watch over them and raised up prophets and spiritual leaders to advise and guide them back to him when they realised the error of the ways.

In 1 Samuel we read of how the people of Israel wished a king to rule over them and to defeat oppressive neighbouring countries rather than listening to the prophets, who were God's spokesmen. Samuel had been told to anoint Saul as their first king, and today's reading tells us how God set everything up, prompting and guiding others through the work of the Holy Spirit. The young man Saul, from a reasonably wealthy farming family, had been sent by his father to locate and bring back a herd of donkeys that had wandered off. Despite roaming through several local areas, the search by Saul and his servant boy was fruitless. The unnamed servant suggested seeking the advice of the prophet Samuel, and also had some financial means to provide the customary offering to the prophet, as they had eaten all their provisions. A group of young girls pointed the way to Samuel, who had already been told by God to anoint Saul as the future king. Samuel gave Saul various signs that he would encounter on his journey home, which were all fulfilled, so Saul knew that what the prophet told him was from God. (He also told him that the donkeys had found their own way home!)

We tend to think of Saul as the tyrannical, insanely jealous, older King, trying his utmost to get rid of the young popular warrior David, and indeed only 5 chapters later in Samuel we learn that God regretted his choice of Saul because he had allowed power to cloud his judgement and had turned away from God. However, God had used the servant boy, the young girls, and his prophet Samuel, and perhaps the donkeys too, to put his plans here into action. Some very ordinary people, some un-named, working together for God. The right people in the right place.

At Pentecost, in a few days' time, we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples, which Jesus had promised at his Ascension – giving them spiritual power to be his witnesses in Israel, Judea, In Jerusalem, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. When we talk about the gift of the Holy Spirit, we might be tempted to dwell too much on speaking in tongues, which is certainly one of the manifestations of the Spirit, but the chief purpose is to enable us to be witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – not necessarily to the ends of the earth, but wherever God puts us – in our own communities, in our work or schools, family or friendship circles. The Corinthians reading lists some of the gifts of the spirit, but emphasising that we all work together as the same body of Christ to serve God's purposes. Some very ordinary people, some unknown to many, working together for God. The right people in the right place.

During this time between Ascension Day and Pentecost we are urged to pray for 5 people every day – family and friends, that we desire to know God in a more personal way.

The prayer for Thy Kingdom Come is below:

Almighty God, your ascended Son has sent us into the world to preach the good news of your Kingdom: inspire us with your Spirit, and fill our hearts with the fire of your love, that all who hear your word may be drawn to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

God Bless and guide you in your witness and prayers.

Margaret S.

## St Dunstan

Matthew 24:42–46

Reflection 19th May 2021

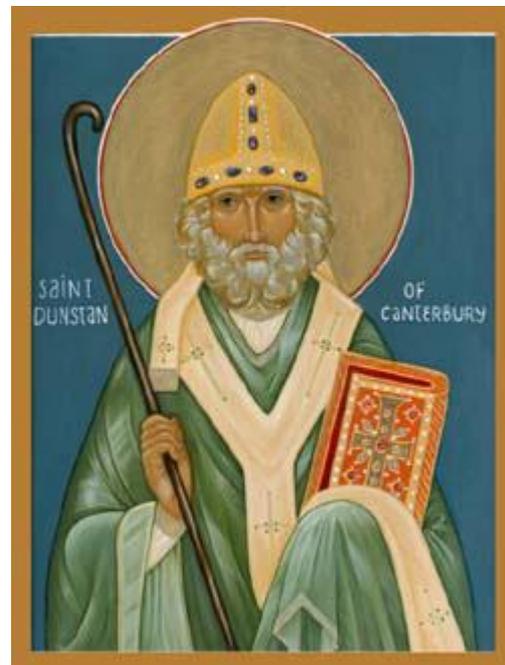
Today is the feast of St Dunstan, a fascinating man whose life story is well worth reading. I've tried to sum it up briefly and I hope you'll agree he's a saint worth remembering.

St. Dunstan was born in AD 909 and educated near Glastonbury.

After living for a time at the Court of King Aethelstan, he became a monk at Glastonbury and devoted himself to the study of the Scriptures and to prayer. At the same time, he became skilled in the arts of painting and music and metalworking, particularly the making church bells and organs.

He was summoned to the Court of King Edmund and became one of his chief councillors. The King, however believed malicious accusations which were brought against Dunstan and dismissed him; but afterwards regretted his injustice and made him Abbot of Glastonbury.

Soon after, he became the treasurer and chief adviser of King Edred; but powerful enemies drove him from the Court and he fled to take refuge in Flanders until the accession of Edgar the Peacemaker, who recalled him and made him his chief minister. He was also appointed Bishop of Worcester and of London and, in AD 960, became Archbishop of Canterbury.



Dunstan was successful in working to establish peace amongst the different peoples settled in England. He endeavoured to raise the standard of monastic life. He built and endowed churches. He loved teaching and encouraged the clergy to acquire knowledge so they might be the teachers of the nation.

After the brief reign of King Edward the Martyr, Dunstan took part in the Coronation of Aethelred the Unready.

He died at Canterbury on 19th May AD 988 and his body was claimed by both Canterbury and Glastonbury.

St Dunstan has been called the reviver of monasticism in England. He was a noted musician, played the harp, composed several hymns, was a skilled metal worker and illuminated manuscripts. He is the Patron Saint of armourers, goldsmiths, locksmiths and jewellers.

The passage from Matthew's gospel that is suggested for today certainly seems to indicate Dunstan's approach to life: *you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him*. He worked hard to ensure that those with whom he came in contact were ready for the 'bridegroom' when He arrives.

*Prayer:*

*Almighty God, who raised up Dunstan to be a true shepherd of The flock, a restorer of monastic life and a faithful counsellor to those in authority: give to all pastors the same gifts of your Holy Spirit that they may be true servants of Christ and all his people; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen*

Angie

## Reflections for Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May

**Psalm 24** [The earth is the Lord's]

**Old Testament:** Deuteronomy 31: 30-32:14 [The Song of Moses]

**New Testament:** 1 John 4: 1-6

**Theme:** Belonging to God

We all enjoy making something, may it be designing something, drawing or painting, carving, developing a nice garden, sewing and knitting and when we look at whatever we have made, we feel part of it as much as our energy has gone into the making of it.

**Psalm 24** opens with the statement of God's ownership of the earth and all that is in it because he made it. The implication for such a strong statement is that the earth should therefore be treated as God's possession. There is a sense of sacredness in it.

You can see clearly that the author of this Psalm had Genesis 1:2, that in the beginning, "the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters". He says in Psalm 24:2, "for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters."

This Psalm known as a processional Psalm helps a worshiper as they process into the temple [seen as an ascension due to the elevated state of the temple] to have in mind the kind of God they are approaching. He who made heaven and earth, and the rhetorical question he poses is, "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in that holy place?" The idea is that whoever goes before God has to reflect God's holiness. The rest of the Psalm celebrates the divine link to kingship. The king who ascends to the throne takes office to represent God to the dominion he rules and this Psalm therefore being linked to the royal Psalms.

**Deuteronomy 31: 30 – 32:14** is a Song of Moses. Moses' time of leadership had reached the end and was passing on the leadership to Joshua son of Nun. As a farewell speech he sings to the assembly. He uses the natural world as a witness of the presence of God in what he says. Moses had experience of God revealing himself through nature such as the burning bush, the wind and the parting of the sea. So he calls for nature as witness before the assembly to testify of God's great acts during his time as the leader who took people out of Egypt and through the wilderness. Moses shows that it is not him who led the people but it was God who did that by guiding Moses and using forces of nature. He led them, clothed them, fed and watered them and their livestock. Moses is therefore implying that the whole hope for the nation is not and should not be on Moses but on God. He closes by saying, "He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag, with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape." [Verse 31-32]

Finally, in **1 John 4:1-6** it tells us that the whole criteria for leading a god-fearing life is to believe in Jesus who was sent by God just in the same way Moses was sent by God. But this passage takes things a step further; it shows that unlike Moses who was sent by God, Jesus was God himself coming in human form as the Christ.

Therefore 2 concluding points:

1. That we are under Christ just as the people of Israel were under Moses. In 1 John 4: 2-3 says, "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world".
2. We belong to God, just as the Psalm says, "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." [Psalm 24:1] compare with 1 John 4: 6 saying, "We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood".

May God bless us in the coming feast of Pentecost as we celebrate the coming of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Friday May 21st 2021

Psalm 139

Sometimes we don't let people get to know us completely because we are afraid they will discover something about us that they won't like. But God already knows everything about us, even the number of hairs on our heads, as mentioned in Matthew 10:30. Still, he accepts and loves us. His total awareness of us, therefore, should comfort us because he stays with us through every situation and in every trial, protecting, loving, and guiding us, and knowing and loving us completely.

God is omnipresent, meaning he is present everywhere. Because of this, you can never escape from his Spirit. This is good news to those who know and love God, because no matter what we do or where we go, we can never be far from God's guiding and comforting presence.

Our God Is So Great!

There is nothing He does not know.

There is nowhere He is not present.

There is nothing He cannot do.

He has searched us and known us! Words and deeds, thoughts and motives, He knows us inside out. He knows when we sit down to relax and when we get up. He can tell what we are thinking, and even anticipates our thoughts. He keeps a constant watch on us. None of our ways are hidden from Him. He knows what we are going to say before we even say it. The future as well as the past and present is completely open to Him.

Not only is God omniscient; He is omnipresent as well. He is in all places at one and the same time. There is no place where man can evade the Holy Spirit of God, no place where he can hide from the presence of the Lord. God is absolutely inescapable

Our God is a GREAT BIG GOD. As we think about these words, sing along with the words below that we have often taught our children (and don't forget to join in with the actions)

Take Care.

God Bless

xxGillxx

[https://youtu.be/-424MpB\\_pd0](https://youtu.be/-424MpB_pd0)

## Reflection 22nd May (Elisabeth)

Psalm 43; Deuteronomy 32:48-end & 34; 1John 5

The psalm for today is very short and seems to carry on from psalm 42 with its repeated words "Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my saviour and my God" (v 5) But it begins with darkness and oppression and then a cry for help to God "send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me" (v 3). A prayer we could all share, especially today, the eve of Pentecost, when we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the first disciples. We all need God's Spirit to fill us, guide us, and transform us, more than ever now as times are so uncertain, the world is full of problems of all kinds, and even the health of our planet is under threat. And so many people do not know God's love for them - we need the Holy Spirit to help us reach out to others.

The Deuteronomy reading is about the end of Moses' life, when he knew that he would only see the promised land in the distance, but would never enter it himself. A massive disappointment to him personally, but in spite of some failings on his part (we all have some of those!) he had played his part in God's plan. Chapter 34 tells of Joshua taking on his role as leader of the Israelites, and ends with a tribute to Moses as a unique prophet "whom the Lord knew face to face" and who performed awesome deeds through God's power working through him. There are always times of disappointments and missed opportunities in our lives, and there have been even more than usual over the last year or so and perhaps more to come. But God still loves and cares for us and we can put our hope in him and trust him for the future, as the psalm reminded us.

The reading from the first letter of John is all about the one greater even than Moses - not just close to God as Moses was, but one with God, sharing the divine nature, even as he shared our humanity in his earthly life. Jesus said "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" and "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:9-10) John is encouraging his readers to grow in faith, trusting in the truth about Jesus. The Holy Spirit testifies to this truth. "Jesus came by water and blood" (v 6) - God proclaimed him as his beloved Son when he rose out of the water when John the Baptist had baptised him, and he shed his blood as died on the cross for us all. And the Spirit is given to us to lead us into all truth, as Jesus had told his disciples at the last supper. John urges us to have confidence in knowing that we are children of God, who have eternal life through faith in Jesus, the Son of God. We are to love God - which means serving him, and so obeying him. But there is a real warning in the last verse of the letter : "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols." (v21) Not the kind of idols for us that Moses was faced with - a golden calf when he had just come down from his mountain top meeting with God - but anything that gets between us and God and draws us away from him. The world is full of things which can become idols if we let them. But the more we know just how much God loves us, the more we will love him in return, and so our faith, our trust and hope in him will be what our lives are based on - the best protection against any kind of idol.