

## Newsletter for St Augustine's and St Mary's Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Sunday's Readings: Psalm 100; Exodus 19. 2-8a; Matthew 9.35-10.8

Wednesday's Readings: Psalm 119.33-56; Job 15; Romans. 8.1-11

### Reflection brought to us by Claire

**'... I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.' (Exodus 19. 4)**

Sometimes it can feel a bit like knitting fog, or one step forward and two steps back. This week I felt that I had hit a brick wall, needed to find another gear but just didn't have another gear within me. I felt like a moany Israelite ... what is God doing bringing me, us into the wilderness and then abandoning us, what is this strange food you expect us to eat, give us something better! I am cross with the Government for all the mixed messages and confusion. Where is the straight path that I can walk on it, where is the level ground I ask? I am reminded of when I would walk in the hills and get lost in the mist. It was always very disorienting. Thinking I was in once place but actually often in a completely different place. I would have a map and compass but had not looked at them, thinking I could find a way. In very dense fog, you have to find a visible mark which may only be a few feet in front of you and walk to that and then from that point find another mark and continue your journey, point by point. Everything at this time can feel a bit foggy!

The book of Exodus narrates for us the Israelite's pilgrimage into the wilderness. It is in the wilderness that God speaks to them and reveals his purposes and covenant. There is a wisdom and truth within the scriptures, that God speaks to us in the wilderness, on the margins and we need to enter the wilderness in order for God's promises to be revealed. It is also true that God's wisdom comes to us from the outsider, the marginalised and excluded, it is their voice that brings a wisdom and gift for us all. The pandemic has caused a collective wandering in the wilderness. Some of us within our own lives may have already experienced times of wilderness and may be used to navigating the landscape.

But this I feel is different and so out of our control that it is easy to lose any sense of direction because there are simply no route maps out. So how then do we cope with this? How do we find our sense of equilibrium?

We know in our heads that God has not abandoned us. The psalmist writes: Make a joyful noise to the Lord ... for the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations' (Psalm 100.1,5). But our experience can be one of feeling abandoned because the landscape is so disorienting, and we just can't get our bearings. Firstly, I think we need to recognise that things are tough and challenging and difficult, there is no easy way through. So, if we feel deflated and off balance that is a good and right reaction to the circumstances around us. It is here that we need to use the map and compass which have been given to us, to help orientate ourselves so we can find a new route, one that we have not walked before. We know that God is good, it is his nature and that the kindly shepherd guides us, so we need to trust the deeper promptings of God's spirit within and beyond us. To trust that underneath all of this are God's everlasting arms and his intention is to carry us on his wings and bring us to himself. His nature is always loving and kind, but his ways are also just and merciful.

In reflecting on BLM and the systemic racism and injustices of which the Church is just a culpable as other organisations and institutions. The compass God

***He's got the whole world in his hand.***

***He's got the whole world in his hand.***

***He's got you and me brother in his hands ...***

***He's got you and me sister in his hands ...***

***He's got everybody here in is hand.***

***He's got the whole world in his hand.***

***'If you want to build a ship, don't drum up men to gather wood, divide the work, and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast endless sea'. Antoine de Saint-Exupery***

gives us is a compass that also shows a true north, that is always just. If we walk along the pathway God has marked out for us, then it will be necessary for us to address these deeper injustices. There is an opportunity moving forward after this pandemic which has caused all of us to think more compassionately and realise that we are firstly humankind, one race one world and to resolve in our own hearts and minds to create a fairer society. Those of us who hold a privilege, and as a white educated women I count myself in that group, will have to address our own faults and be willing to accommodate diversity and difference which should and must challenge our indifference and the status quo. For too long black people have been discriminated and have had to fight too hard for opportunities for life and flourishing. Just as there is no easy way forward out of the Covid pandemic, there is no easy or cheap way forward to tackle racism and injustice. But we will find our true north when we find God's true north and his ways are always just and merciful. We need to keep hold of the bigger vision something expressed to us in Saint Exupery's words ... we need to yearn for the vast endless sea ... we need to keep hold of God's own vision and heart, a vision where all people are treated fairly and with dignity and worth. Then maybe the fog will lift!

The way becomes obscure, but there is sufficient light once our eyes are accustomed to the dark. We may not realize that we are being guided in a particular direction, but the shepherd's crook is kindly prompting. We may be troubled, but an imperceptible inclination of the heart in prayer is all that is needed for our calming.

Jim Cotter - Reflections on Psalm 119

#### **Collect for this Sunday**

God of truth,  
Help us to keep you law of love  
And to walk in ways of wisdom,  
That we may find true life  
In Jesus Christ your Son.

An informal Zoom meeting is offered at 11am each Sunday a separate link will be emailed with details of how to join. Please contact Catherine or Karen if you want this link.

A message from St Mary's: We've adapted to meet the huge needs that have arisen as a direct result of Covid and we're now providing emergency food boxes to hundreds of families in Sheffield each week. This week alone we are sending food boxes to 363 households - well over 700 people. Most of them were coping before the crisis, but the weight of unemployment, loss of school meals and demands of social isolation means that people are not coping.

Please visit this link to find out what we're doing. If you like it, and are able to, please donate to help us buy food for Sheffield families.

[www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/good-food-for-sheffield-families](http://www.avivacommunityfund.co.uk/good-food-for-sheffield-families)

Bread for Sheffield: St Augustine's is also now a collection point for flour get your orders in!  
[www.breadforsheffield.wixsite.com/flour](http://www.breadforsheffield.wixsite.com/flour)

Roots resources are providing free prayers and reflections for adults, families and children for each Sunday  
<https://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/public-copies/worshipathome14jun>

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