

Sermon 5th June 2016 2nd Sunday after Trinity

Today we hear of the power of the Lord our God. Two women have their sons restored to life, the jar of meal and the jug of oil did not fail and Paul tells people that he did not learn his faith from others but by divine revelation.

A potted history of the Old Testament now. King Ahab was married to the wicked Jezebel and they worshipped Baal, who was supposed to bring rains and bountiful harvests and Ahab had temples and altars built to honour him, thus leading the nation into sin. Israel had no faithful king throughout its history, all worshipped pagan gods, there were few priests left from the tribe of Levi and those appointed by the kings of Israel were corrupt and ineffective.

But now Elijah enters the scene, the first in a long line of important prophets that God sent to Israel and Judah, over the next 300 years, to help them turn from sin and moral and spiritual decline.

So up he goes to the most powerful man in the land and says 'My God is more powerful than yours, so no more rain until I say so.' Quite a daring thing to do, the act of a faithful, obedient man. After this confrontation the Lord sends Elijah to hide in Kerith Ravine, after all he probably had an insulted king and a hungry, angry nation after him.

In a nation that by law has to provide for prophets it is ironic that ravens, unclean birds, and a foreign widow care for Elijah. He came across the widow after God sent him from the ravine when the stream dried up and told him who to look for.

The widow and her household were starving because of the famine, she trusts Elijah enough to give him some of her last morsels and her trust is rewarded. But worse is yet to come. A famine survived but the son dies. The great faith of Elijah is used to bring the son back to life and the widow understands completely that Elijah is a man of God.

A story of people so long ago, but what can we learn? Elijah had what we can all have, a deep relationship with God. He learnt to listen and obey even though he was sent to confront not comfort. His commitment to God was costly as we will hear later, but he did great things through his power. Miracles seem so out of reach for many of us, and yet they happened to ordinary people, who stepped out in obedience, who took a step of faith.

We also learn that God uses the ordinary things of life, ingredients for food, a bird, a stream. He uses the things around us, the trick sometimes is to recognise them. He also helps us in unexpected ways and places, we must not let our expectations, our solutions to problems restrict him.

We also need to think how easy it is to develop idol worship. It is difficult for some people to accept authority in their lives, let alone from someone they cannot see. It is difficult today not to worship 'things', to want more, newer, bigger, better. To put ones own needs before

others, from little things like enjoying loud music to needing to have power over others, to have them look up to you. We live in a society that is fast loosing the values of God, where are our prophets?

Miracles in our readings from a loving, powerful God but also a sense of compassion. Our God grieves for his people as a widow grieves for her son, he reaches out to us, he asks us to listen to his whisper, to grow in relationship with him and to act in obedience with the power of the Holy Spirit. He asks us to be like him and care for others, even if it's costly.