

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost 5 Jul 2015

2 Samuel 5:1-10

Psalm 48

2 Corinthians 12: 2-10

Mark 6:1-13

[Proper 9B/Ordinary 14B/Pentecost 6 July 5, 2015](#) Textweek

This week's Old Testament continues the story of David we have been reading for a few weeks; and today there are echoes in the narrative that suggest David is the new Moses, "*it was you who led out Israel and brought it in*"; and also that gives us a glimpse of David as a prefiguration of Christ, "*It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel*".

We read that David, like Noah, Abraham and Moses, makes a covenant, he makes manifest 'a new creation', a new order of living.

David is a significant figure in the Hebrew tradition which has principally read the Scriptures as a literal history of God's particular relationship with one distinct group of people; and David's significance, together with much of the associated traditional theology was carried over into the Christian tradition which was itself a movement within that same Hebrew tradition.

Now, as we read the Scriptures from a more enlightened perspective, with an understanding that 'all' are God's people; we find in David's story a re-telling of those stories previously ascribed to earlier 'significant' figures; and that identifies to us a reality and an application in what these narratives seek to impart to readers in every age.

Noah's story was one of re-creation, a new creation was made real and a new covenant of understanding was established; the same for Abraham and for Moses; in today's reading we have the new creation of the unified kingdoms of Judah and Israel under David.

It is however not the historical achievement of these individuals that we are reading; rather we are looking at the life processes, the movement of creation, that the writers have employed these individuals to illustrate.

The advent of Christ, and the teachings captured in the gospel narratives, gives us another re-telling of these same life processes, this time embodied in Christ so that the fullness of all humanity was made real; that which was previously echoed in the Old Testament narratives is now seen as reality.

Much of what Christ revealed was, and still is, confined by a hanging on to the tradition that he sought to re-covenant, re-imagine and re-create. The early writers and interpreters could only understand Christ as a continuation of 'the line of David', rather than a movement beyond into a new order of living.

Paul is an example for us of one who was entrenched in the Hebrew, Old Testament tradition and yet he saw beyond it; and in today's second reading we have Paul sharing his own experience of the movement that resulted from his new enlightenment.

We are being asked to contemplate Paul's description of movement; "*caught up to the third heaven*", "*caught up into Paradise*" and witness to revelations of "*exceptional character*".

Perhaps we can begin to see, through Paul's experience, an opening to the reality of resurrection; a new order for living that takes us into the landscape of eternity, a much broader worldview that the primitive sight that cannot see beyond death.

Paul has been 'caught up' into a new way of life, and that new creation reflects his Christ-likeness: "*caught up into Paradise*" echoes the call of Christ from the cross: "*today you will be with me in Paradise*".

As we seek to engage this same movement for ourselves we are introduced to the reality check of Paul's living in faith, the reality of moving into life's fullness; "*a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated*".

So for us, 'here and now' we might contrast and compare our own faith journey with that of Paul's; we might look at our movement into paradise; and consider the two aspects Paul has identified: the opening and/or the opportunity for being "caught up"; and so ask ourselves what are we caught up in?

And then explore the 'thorn(s) in our flesh; and might initially be a daunting ask; however Paul found strength through the 'thorn of weakness' and more than that he discovered the sufficiency of grace.

I paused here when I was compiling the sermon to put down on paper the "thorn in my side"; and then paused once I had listed 21 thorns!

However, the exercise continues; for alongside the acknowledgement of the thorn, its debilitating effects, its pain and the blood (life force) that it drains, is another revelation; like the cracks that let light in, here is also to be found the grace of empowerment.

The bible is not a book of rules, nor a guide to make us good Christians, or devout Jews; it is a treasure of ancient insight and enlightened vision for us to seek our reflection, and discover our fullest sense of being.

Once again today's readings are there for us to be "caught up' in; and when we come to the gospel we are reminded of the simplicity of our discipleship and the process of discovering our Christ-likeness.

The first part of the gospel provides us with an orientation toward community, encouraging us to go beyond family and beyond the confines or safety of our home; *"Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."* 5 *And he could do no deed of power there"*

The activity of the disciple, and so the realisation of our fullest humanity, has an orientation toward community and to those beyond our own kind.

Our journey into the paradise that Paul was caught up in, is not a solitary journey; *"He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two"*, we need to walk with another, to share both the grace and the thorns that we discover in our becoming.

And finally, the real good news; *“He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts”*; it is not expensive!

Our movement into being, both as the body of Christ, and as seeker’s life’s fullness; is a movement of re-creation, and so is very much a part of the unfolding of tomorrow; it is not a selfish journey, for the way we live and an our orientation has an impact on everyone and everything.

May we all, like Paul, get caught up this week!