

# Twenty Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

## 13 November 2016

[Isaiah 65: 17-25; Psalm - A Song of Isaiah ;2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13 Luke 21:5-19](#) from Vanderbilt

[Proper 28C / Ordinary 33C / Pentecost +26 Nov 13, 2016](#) from Textweek

Let's start with an sms message; omg... twtwtw....tgis!

O my God.... that was the week that was.... thank God it's Sunday!

This last week we received news of another 9/11 disaster in the USA with Donald Trump becoming 'President Elect'. We also received the news that I will resign as rector of St Paul's next year; now add to that, a funeral early in the week, an evening and most of one day with our church council together looking at our future plans for the parish, then most of one day with an SBS news reporter interested the story of integration of a Muslim community within the St Paul's precinct, another parishioner confronting the possibility of cancer, a minute of silence to remember WWI and the collection of five fridges and a washing machine to help meet needs identified by Just Manna.

Thank God it's Sunday!

Of course each and every week are routinely filled for each of us with the many calls and encounters that we all attend to; but sometimes the routine of our everyday experience is disturbed and perhaps my notice of resignation (at least for me) and surprise election of Donald trump in the USA have both been disturbing events that have interrupted our routine and disturbed our sense of knowing...

[Pause here and consider how we have not been equally disturbed by the crisis of refugees that continues to unfold, the plight of those going hungry, and those suffering the ravages of war. Why are we not disturbed to find out that in Holland they are closing prisons because there are not enough prisoners- and yet the opposite is happening here?]

The news of election and resignation this last week both, in their own worlds, symbolise change; and most of us find change a disturbing dynamic; so "tgis"; thank God it's Sunday!

For Sunday by Sunday we come together to know God, to become mindful once again of the Divine, we come to seek God and to receive strength, rekindle trust and understanding and to remember and appreciate the Divine presence, a real presence, with us in all that disturbs.

And, once again, when we look at the readings that are set for today, we are not reading ancient texts and narratives of a time long gone; rather we see in them a reflection of the Divine life that we ourselves participate in right now.

The first reading from Isaiah speaks of 'change';

"For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth".

And the gospel reading speaks of 'change';

“As for these things that you see, the days will come”.

This week, both in the news we have received and in the scriptures we are reading, we are being reminded that tomorrow is not a given; yesterday and today do not equal tomorrow, rather, they point us toward the newness of tomorrow.

Looking again at the first reading; picture it being read by Donald Trump, for it very much sounds like an election promise of ‘making Jerusalem great again’.

And in a similar manner, but also quite different tone, we can also hear the gospel being read by the president elect who is going to tear all that was built by the previous administration.

Both readings speak of change; and in the voice of Isaiah and in the voice of Jesus we have two very different orientations of change; one of creation and one of destruction.

Perhaps together they echo the process of dying and rising; for the ‘new’ by its very definition is not a continuation of the old; it is ‘new’, another different reality altogether.

So the “new heavens and a new earth” of Isaiah: the rising of creation, offers a new and different paradigm and

“the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.”

What we witnessed this week in the USA is that Democrats and republicans alike expected a continuation, even the polls pointed toward a ‘new’ that was to be a continuation of the ‘old’.

And perhaps that explains our disturbance; the newness was unexpected, and the President Elect looks nothing like the former or current President.

So again we go back to the text, back to Isaiah for we still need to make sense of the disturbing process of change for ourselves.

Isaiah speaks of a new creation, a new vision; and if we try and imagine Donald Trump reading the text we know it doesn’t fit; for Isaiah’s vision comes from a different place, a different voice, it represents a different narrative.

For Isaiah, this was the voice of God; “the Lord” is the one with the vision, and “the Lord” is the one who will bring it about.

So fast forward from this Divine promise, revealed by Isaiah after 722BCE and look at Israel today.

“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent--its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.”

“Israel is the most militarized society in the world according to the Global Militarization Index.” [worldknowing.com] so we would have to question ‘why was Isaiah’s vision so wrong, and did ‘the Lord’ fail in his promise’?

The people of Israel, the people of promise, still retain a narrative of waiting, waiting for a messiah to fulfil the promise. And we've inherited the same 'waiting', only we pretend that the Messiah has come, and so we now wait for a second coming.

But return again to the text;

“I am about to create new heavens and a new earth”.

What was primitively interpreted as something that would be ‘the Lord’s’ doing, completely misses the revelation of Christ, and perhaps also the true knowing of Isaiah; “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”.

When we read again Isaiah’s vision with the “I” as ourselves it does make sense; and we also know that it is neither the voice of Trump nor any other politician, it is our narrative.

When we see ourselves as the “I” in Isaiah’s vision, we see that there is nothing within that vision that is beyond our capacity

We are each and all the “I” that features in Isaiah’s vision, and perhaps, in Paul’s terms, it is only when we are “*living in idleness*” that the vision remains unrealised.

We will all look for a point of reference to make sense of the disturbances occasioned by change; an in relation to the letter I sent round regarding my decision to resign as rector, I have already heard three very different reference points that individuals have used to make sense of the change the decision represents.

Divorce, death and retirement; these have all been spoken of as symbolic reference points to understand what this change represents.

And in many ways such references can be very helpful, for certainly in both the cases of divorce and death we become very real, these are intensely intimate movements in which we often learn more about ourselves and each other through the process of grieving.

However, in looking at retirement for a reference we might also contemplate the warning given in the second reading:

“Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right.”

As we journey together into a new creation, I invite you to use Isaiah’s vision as a point of reference, and consider that death, divorce and retirement can all inform that which disturbs our ego-centric vision, and they each invoke a deeper intimacy.

However let’s consider resurrection as the primary reference point for change, for in resurrection our deepest being, our Divine nature is brought to birth and we become a part of the promise:

“I am about to create new heavens and a new earth”.

Peter Humphris