Sunday 26

June 2022

Holy Trinity – Holy Communion (8.00am)

Trinity 2

1 Kings 19:5-16, 19-21

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Luke 9:51-62

Back in the late 16th century there was a Carmelite nun, theologian and

catholic reformer known as St. Teresa of Avila. She had spent many years

travelling around on God’s business both founding and reforming convents in

Spain.

Journeys were both unsafe and uncomfortable in those days but she was never

daunted. However, one day, when she was at the end of her tether with

fatigue, her carriage broke and it tipped her out into the mud.

She is reported to have screamed at God... “No wonder you have so few

friends, when you treat them so badly”.

This is exactly the same frame of mind as Elijah in our Old Testament reading

this morning. We even hear Elijah moaning at God with the same frankness as

St. Teresa. Shocking? Possibly, but you have to remember what Elijah had just

gone through. He was preserved throughout a major drought, he has raised

the dead, he confronted a king and killed the priests of Baal, and God has sent

fire and rain down at his request.

But none of these miracles had any effect on the king. The king still hates him,

the king still prefers to worship his wife Jezebel’s gods, and Jezebel herself has

promised to kill Elijah in revenge.

So now Elijah is, quite frankly, completely fed up.

He runs away from the struggle, out into the wilderness and he asks to die.

He doesn’t want to fight anymore; he doesn’t want to do any of the hard and

thankless things that God has called him to. He no longer wants to be God’s

prophet, since God clearly has no idea how to treat his friends.

Still, though, God just won’t leave him alone.

He sends angels to pester him with food and drink and Elijah, who clearly still

has the hump, grumpily carries on with his journey to Mount Horeb.

Interestingly, God makes no attempt to dispute Elijah’s version of events or

defend himself in any way. Instead, he comes to meet Elijah on the holy

mountain. Angry and weary as he is, Elijah still recognises God. He knows that

the wind, the earthquake and the fire are sound effects and it is only when he

hears the sound of silence, or the gentle whisper as the NIV has it, that he

finally stumps out to meet his God.

Even now, Elijah isn’t overawed.

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He finds it in himself to set out all his complaints against God. But God is

gracious and he, who has complete control of the elements, effectively allows

Elijah to resign. He is allowed to pass on this dangerous and unremitting work

to Elisha.

There is something very moving about the interaction between God and Elijah

in this story.

The work clearly hasn’t been completed but God recognises Elijah’s need. All

through the story God has taken care of Elijah, feeding him, working miracles

at his request, but he doesn’t say to Elijah...”For goodness sake, even now

can’t you just trust me after all I have done for you?” Instead, he comes to his

old friend, in great gentleness, and gives in to him.

As Christians we don’t have to face every difficult situation as if we were super

heroes. Equally, we don’t have to pretend that we never get down or

depressed. Elijah, godly man though he was, showed symptoms that anyone

who has lived with the effects of depression will recognise. God supplied three

immensely practical gifts, which are also recognisable as the most helpful

response to anyone reeling under the weight of life with depressive illness - the

three gifts of sleep, company, and food and drink. God was there for him.

And so, Elijah rediscovered the presence of God in a way he hadn’t expected.

It wasn’t in any splendour or spectacle, but in quiet and tranquility. Just the

very kind of touch of God on our lives that we often completely miss.

This is more than a story about a still, small voice of calm though. It is an

illustration of God’s persistence especially in times of defeat and depression.

It is a story that reminds me of the words of that famous hymn that speaks of

a “love that will not let me go”.

Amen.