

Bible Study 10th June 2020

Preparation

In our Bible Study this week we will be reading the following lectionary readings set for Sunday (14th June):

- ◆ **Genesis 18:1-15, 21:1-7**
- ◆ **Romans 5:1-8**
- ◆ **Matthew 9:35-10:8,**

When doing your Bible preparation or study this week, perhaps you might try looking at the outside world as well as looking at the Bible readings. Maybe focus on one story in the news (local, national or international) which causes you to feel strong feelings. Then read one of the readings. Repeat the process (with the same news story) with the other Bible readings if you wish.

When exploring this week's readings you can following the pattern below:

Pray a simple prayer first. I suggest that you pray about the situation in the outside world and then ask God to speak to that situation.

Then read one of the readings

PAUSE and reflect on that reading

- Did you understand anything new?
- Did something shift in your understanding?
- Where is God in your reflections?

If anything particular has struck you, try returning to it and reflecting again on that part of the reading. You might also want to make some notes – perhaps start a journal.

After your reflection, you can move on to another reading. (You don't have to look at them all.)

When you have finished your reflections, pray the final prayer:

Final Prayer:

Jesus your compassion changed our world forever. Help us to see with your eyes, and help us to offer your love to all who feel hurt or abandoned. **Amen.**

A few reflections

A verse from Matthew's Gospel (9:36) is one of my favourite bits of the Bible. The translation "harassed and helpless" comes from two Greek words which might be equally be translated, "fleeced and thrown away".

When he sees the oppression and poverty around him, Jesus is moved to compassion – the Greek word here is *esplagchnisthe* try saying it (not easy) but it has a feel to it which speaks of compassion and suggests a movement of the inner parts, where the deepest feelings come from – literally translated we might say, I suppose, Jesus feels it in his guts! His reaction to this feeling is a desire to heal things and he sends out the disciples to do just that. I reflect that it is Jesus' deeply compassionate response to others who are hurting and seem abandoned – like sheep without a shepherd – that motivates him here.

In the Genesis reading, Sarah laughs when she hears the news that she will be blessed with a child by God. Mentally and emotionally, she is not in a place where she can believe or have sufficient faith. I sense that when Sarah laughs it is not the full laughter of joy which escapes her lips but the amazed and somewhat cynical laughter that says "This is not possible!"

God challenges Sarah for her laughter and, nine months later, when the child is born, Sarah has had time to reflect. Now she is joyful and her laughter may still be filled with amazement, but her cynicism has gone. The knowledge that God has delivered on the promises which were made in Mamre evoke a new response in Sarah, "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."

There is a sense in which I am challenged to laugh too, not a cynical laugh but a refreshing and amazed laugh that, despite everything, God is still with us and is faithful to us. I cannot always see a way forward, for example in the Covid crisis, but thinking about Jesus with the disciples, I am reminded that it is important to share good news with those around me who are harassed and exploited.

Jesus offers me resurrection – Some may laugh at this with cynicism, but in the end resurrection becomes my joyful hope and our lived experience.