

Trinity Sunday Year B 2021

After a long period of political stability and relative prosperity, Judea is faced with a growing challenge. King Uzziah has died. He had reigned for forty years, and following his death, the vultures gathered. In turn Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome - one after another they will come - how are the people to respond? Who can they rely on?

One of the options they abandon is to rely on God. So God needs a messenger to point out the folly of their ways. That messenger, appointed in the year that King Uzziah dies, was Isaiah. The description of his calling which we have heard this morning seems to be his personal recollection - written in the first person singular. 'I saw the Lord'. As he worships in the Temple the smoke from burning sacrifices fills the worship area, and he sees the large winged creatures carved on the sides of God's throne come to life and fly about him, singing of the thrice-holy God and of his glory. The vision makes Isaiah deeply aware of his sinfulness, and that of those amongst whom he lives. 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips'. And then the - well, relief seems far to gentle a word - the cathartic feeling of forgiveness, followed by the

calling. 'Who will go for us?' 'Here am I, send me'. There is work to be done and Isaiah is to be part of that - although he is told (in the next few verses) that this is going to be hard work, and mostly failure - but it still needs to be done. His visionary experience is not an end in itself - it is a beginning. It will lead to mission, as the Lord, who is totally other, high and lofty, stoops down to rescue his hurting people, even though they have turned their backs on Him. There will be a remnant who survives.

And He will do this again - 'for God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life'. We have spent the last six months thinking about that - walking with the Son, from Advent as we prepared for his coming, through birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, right up until last Sunday when we celebrated the fulfilment of his promise to send the gift of the Holy Spirit. And we remember what Jesus told his disciple Philip - 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'.

In the person of Jesus the mystery of God has a face, a voice, a language, a life. In the Gospels we meet Jesus' friends and enemies, his enthusiasms and dislikes, his love and his anger. We get caught up in his struggles for what is right, his opposition for

what is wrong, his love and care for the marginalised and the despised; we are challenged to keep alive the values he cherished. In Jesus we can taste and see the loving goodness of God, the one who still stoops down to rescue his wayward children.

When we celebrated Pentecost last Sunday, we were reminded that we cannot begin to understand the mystery of God unless we are gifted with the power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples knew and loved Jesus - 'You have been with me from the beginning' - but they needed the Spirit in order to recognise the full truth about him, so that they could unlock their fears and unlock the doors. To understand Jesus we need the Spirit - to reach the Father we need the Son - 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' - Jesus is God's adventure amongst us. So it is the mystery of three-in-one bound together by love which is at the heart of our faith.

As the Epistle reading reminds us, we are not God's slaves living in fear, we are God's children; we have been given the right to belong to God's family. That is the depth of his love; and so we can call God Father - our divine parent. Paul is drawing his readers (that's us) into the family of God; he speaks of sons and

daughters of God, our Father, of believers as God's children, of children as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

We all feel a need to belong, to know the presence of a loving other - parent, partner, family, friend. That is why this last year has been so difficult for so many. Isolation and loneliness have taken their toll - the effect on the mental and emotional health of so many is immeasurable. That need to belong, people to call family and friends, relationships which are safe and rewarding, places which feel like home, not prison. We all need to know where we belong, that we belong.

Jesus said he had no place to lay his head, but he surrounded himself with people he felt at home with, and drew them into relationship with his Father. And Paul tells us we can share in this relationship, that by the power of the Spirit we can also cry 'Abba - Father', because we are fellow-heirs with Christ. The three-in-one establishes a home for us. To belong we do not need to be members of a street gang or a country club or a political party. We do not need to establish our identity or worth by the house we live in or the car we drive. Our identity is found in our relationship with God - and even if that relationship leads us - like Isaiah - into danger or challenging circumstances, we

have the assurance of God's parental love, the power of the Holy Spirit he has gifted to us and the constant presence of our brother Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God - God in three persons, blessed Trinity.