

St Marc, Grenoble
Sunday 13th June 2021 (Trinity 2)
2 Cor 5: 6 - 10, 14 - 17
Psalm 92: 1 - 4, 12 - 15
Mark 4: 26 - 34
'A New Creation'

Good morning to everyone - those of you here, and those joining by Zoom
It is really good to be with all of you.

PRAY

Most of you know by now, I love exploring scripture and the promises it gives us; and it's interesting: the same themes occur again and again - in books, which were written hundreds of years apart.

I preached on today's set readings 9 years ago, when I retired from parish ministry in the Church in Wales. At first glance they're a little obtuse, but they have a common theme and a very similar message.

Even the OT lesson (which we didn't read today) is short but encouraging especially to an old fellow!

In Ezekiel 17: 24 God says: 'I will take a shoot and plant it, it will produce branches and bear fruit ...and later I'll dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish';

Ps 92 continues in the same vein: The righteous will flourish like a palm tree ... they will flourish in the courts of our God ... They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green – proclaiming 'The Lord is upright; He is my Rock, there's no wickedness in Him.'

What an important reminder that Psalm is, for all of us. Our faith in God must be the foundation of our lives – or we'll simply end up like dead trees, feeling useless and only fit for the fire.

In our 2 Corinthians reading, Paul says: 'We live our lives by faith, not by sight'. He says we should work hard to please the Lord.

Later, he reminds us that because Jesus, the Messiah, died for all of us 'those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and was raised (again) on their behalf.'

Paul continues with an encouraging assurance: 'Thus, if anyone is in the Messiah, they are a new creation! Old things have gone, and look - everything has become new!'

He goes on to explain 'all this comes from God, who reconciled us to himself through the Messiah (Jesus) and [then] gave us the ministry of reconciliation. ... and He has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation.

Later in the chapter, Paul says: 'So we are ambassadors, speaking on behalf of the Messiah. Later again, he says: 'as we work together with God, we appeal to you ... when you accept God's grace, don't let it go to waste!

This is what God says: I listened to you when the time was right, I came to your aid on the day of salvation. Look! The right time is now! Look! The day of salvation is here!

I don't know about you, but I find that charge from Paul very challenging.

Do you ever feel there's a danger we may have received God's grace in vain?? Paul urges us to make the most of the gift of God's grace; he tells us it's our job to share God's reconciling love with those around us, who aren't yet enjoying the grace of that love.

At a time when our culture seems to be in meltdown, it is no soft option being a Christian – we have demanding work to do, as Ambassadors for Jesus in a sick and hurting world. What are we doing about it??

So, let's round off with our Gospel reading – two short, punchy parables.

Crowds of people were pressing to hear Jesus, who was preaching from a boat, so that everyone could hear Him.

Why was He speaking in parables?

I thought parables were supposed to make things easier to understand and that was true to a point; but it seems Jesus wanted some people to understand what He was saying, but not others.

Apparently Jesus wanted those committed to following Him to learn more, but not to provide opportunities for those who were trying to discredit Him.

Both parables liken the Kingdom of God to seeds, which once planted, almost inevitably, produce a remarkable harvest. I know what that's like - recently Julia planted loads of seeds and we have plants all over the place!

But, it doesn't mean we should sit back and do nothing. Even if we feel our contribution to God's Kingdom is insignificant or fruitless (as I have often felt my ministry to be) we should not give up or be discouraged – God has remarkable ways of producing a rich harvest, even when we think we have failed in our efforts to serve Him.

We are called to be faithful, and to plant the seed – to share the Gospel, the good news of God’s amazing love and He will often surprise us with the harvest He produces.

I’ve learned not to make assumptions about the results of my ministry - they’re usually way off beam!

But, I’ve learned to try to trust and obey what God is calling me to do ... He’ll do the rest and He produces results, which never cease to amaze me.

As I close, I’d like that to be both a challenge and an encouragement to you.

Our congregation here is quite small at present; but I believe, if we’re faithful – and IF we’re willing to allow God to work in His own remarkable ways, and we do what He tells us to do - rather than what we may like to do (because it’s more comfortable) ...

I firmly believe He will surprise us with amazing harvests ... but, we must listen to His directions - and be open to allowing Him to work through us ...

Let’s Pray