

Over these last few weeks we have been reading of the story of David, from his anointment as King by Samuel as the youngest of his family, to his rise to power as King over all Israel, the establishment of Jerusalem as his capital. It has been a very human story as we have witnessed the highs and the lows; the strengths and the weaknesses, the faithfulness and the failures of this unique figure; the founder of what was intended to be an eternal dynasty.

In the figure of David we have seen played out all the temptations of human power. It has been well said that ‘all power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’. We saw that in his seduction of Bathsheba, in his almost casual disposal of her husband, Uriah the Hittite, to certain death on the battlefield. We saw last week a man who faced up to what he had done when confronted by the prophet Nathan.

Today in excerpts from 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel we have seen the outworking within David’s family of the violent tensions Nathan spoke about: as sons of various wives position themselves to seize the throne when the old man dies. His son Absalom has decided to strike first and has driven his father out of Jerusalem. In the course of a vicious battle, against all the wishes of David, Absalom is killed. Our passage closes with a picture of raw pain as David grieves the death of his son.

I want to stay with that raw pain of loss. David at that point is inconsolable, there is no mention of God – he doesn’t seem to be there. As he stands weeping on his balcony, in his status as king, in all his military power, he was powerless to protect his son. He is inconsolable.

Over these last couple of weeks we have also seen the place of the Psalms in our worship, as aids to reflection, to developing thinking on themes raised in our Old Testament Lessons.

Our Psalm this morning, Psalm 130, almost begins where David leaves off:

1 Out of the depths have I cried to you, O Lord;  
Lord, hear my voice; ♦  
let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication.

This is where I find myself connecting. Many of you have known times of darkness, of sadness, when the world just seems to collapse around you. And you feel very alone. We find ourselves crying out into the darkness, wondering is anyone listening, is anyone caring. In friends, in perfect strangers, in their words or simple acts of kindness, or simply their presence, we find that we are not alone. Looking back over life, that is how I have experienced the presence, the love of God.

This set me thinking of what we are called to be as Church, as a community. We are to be a community within which we can find light and hope in the midst of darkness and despair. But it is not to be an inward looking community, it is to be a community that is to be a sign of light and hope to the world at large.

Our Psalm continues:

3 But there is forgiveness with you, ♦  
so that you shall be feared.

4 I wait for the Lord; my soul waits for him; ♦  
in his word is my hope.

Within the community of faith, we come to understand the meaning of forgiveness, we come to understand the importance of forgiveness. This community of faith is called to be a community of forgiveness, a community of healing and reconciliation; a community that models healing and reconciliation in a broken and hurting world.

I find myself turning, as I often do, to the Prayer of St Francis:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

We don't always get it right. It is sometimes hard to let go of the hurts, it is sometimes hard to see the light in the darkness. That is where the community of faith is so important as we support and understand one another.

It is also important to keep our eyes on the world outside our doors. And so over the next few months I am going to be inviting a number of speakers to our Family Communion Services who will speak of the work of the Church out

there beyond our doors, beyond our Parish boundaries. We will be hearing from a representative of Tear Fund. Bishops Appeal is currently supporting one of their projects working with Syrian Refugees in the Lebanon. We will also hear a representative of ‘Release’ a charity working with ex-prisoners as well as from Scott Evans, the Church of Ireland Chaplain in UCD.

As we have followed the story of the very human figure of David, in all his strengths and weaknesses, I have been strangely affirmed that God can and does work in and through, and even despite, our imperfections as individuals, as a community, as a Church.

We can but offer ...

our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work to your praise and glory.