

FARNHAM PARISH CHURCH

Church and Community

Bible Readings: Isaiah 55:1-9

Date: 24 March 2019

Theme: Only God ...

The last two weeks we have been focusing on the temptations and testings of Jesus in the wilderness and the challenge of those who came against him in his ministry.

Today we are seeing that as background, setting it to one side, to allow us to celebrate all that God has done amongst us in 2018, and to look to him for more in the weeks and months and years to come.

The great thing about God is that he knows what we need. He knows what we need and he supplies it extravagantly. For those who are thirsty, there is water, wine and milk. For those who are hungry, there is rich food. The best of fare. And it's all free. God's extravagant generosity.

Not only that, he cements and extends the relationship he offers to his people. He began with David, now it's for all his people: everlasting, steadfast and sure. The promise made to him is now theirs. The ministry entrusted to him is now theirs. The calling on his life is now on theirs as well.

David's job as witness, leader and commander is now a shared role for all his people – to call out to those who are not yet part of the family and to see them come and be welcomed and integrated and embraced.

And this happens not because we are particularly marvelous, but because God is and it's he who glorifies his church. And his church's being glorified, makes us attractive to others and full of potential and possibility.

An annual meeting is a chance to give thanks for all that God has given us in each other. Reading the reports and hearing the stories, reminds us of our rich heritage and of our varied and colourful life. Church family here is a wonderful thing to be part of. New people who join us often say we are friendly and welcoming and some even feel like they have come home when they pitch up.

At the same time, there is a sense in which there is gathering momentum ... we are not yet the finished article. Isaiah says:

‘Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

There are times in life when God is just nearer to us than at other times. When things were difficult here at St Andrew's, some of those who were here then wondered where God was in it all. And yet from a firmer foundation than we might have thought, he has been able to build again, to restore and renew and redeem.

In all we are doing at PCC, we are seeking the Lord and calling upon him. In this time of change, we know we can't do anything without him. And yet we also know he can and will provide all we need.

Some people have found and are still finding change difficult. I know that and I appreciate how troublesome it can be when your world is shaken and the familiar is removed. With everything going on in the country at the moment, more change and in the church as well may just not be very helpful. I get that.

But God's perspective is the vision to which we are working, God's authority is the one to which we submit, and God's calling is the one we pursue. Our view is only finite and limited by our experience and our willingness to let go. God's ability and desire is limitless and bigger, and broader, more expansive than we might ever have dreamed possible.

And he is the one who leads us on ... Isaiah reminds us of this:

*°For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
°For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

Being the town-centre church, the one looked to by the other churches in the town (their words not mine), the one which can celebrate all of life is an amazing place to be. Being part of this church family is both a huge privilege and a great joy.

God knows what we need and he supplies it extravagantly ...

for young and old
for rich and poor
for the well and poorly
for those fully confident in Jesus or for those just putting a toe in the water to seek him, discover more and check him out
in theatre
in drama
in music
in civic activity
in national and political issues
in our schools
in the university
in residential care homes, the hospice and the hospital
in private lives and public spaces

this is our God, we are his church and today of all days we are to celebrate and praise him for all he is, all he calls us to be and all he enables us to do.

Our new mission statement or vision statement or motto – I am not sure what we should call it ... is this: Loving God, Living Faith, Serving Community.

This simple three phrase text says it all. But even this is not the final word – it's the direction of travel and he has still more to give, more to reveal and more to release ... in us and through us for his glory and for his kingdom.

Today we look back and say thank you; and we look ahead, we are up for it and we pray bring it on.

Let's pray ...