

Reflection for this Sunday

This coming Thursday is the feast of the Conversion of St Paul.

Imagine a church prayer meeting in Damascus in the mid 30s AD. The Christians there had heard that Saul of Tarsus is on the way to their city to find Christians and arrest them. I wonder- what would they have been praying? Perhaps 'Lord, protect us. Lord, stop him getting here'. Or maybe even 'Lord, let some unfortunate accident befall him on the way'?!

I doubt that anyone suggested 'lets pray that he becomes our new full time evangelist and missionary'.

Why not? He had a lot going for him afterall. He was determined and fearless- he would always work hard for what he believed. Had a good understanding of the Jewish faith and was an expert in the scriptures. He had friends in high places. The only problem, the very large problem, was that he hated the church. He thought Christians were deluded and dangerous and wanted to wipe the church from the face of the earth.

But, on the road to Damascus, Saul had his amazing conversion experience which you can read about it in Acts chapter 9. He met with the risen Jesus Christ and his life was changed forever. Despite all the fears and expectations of the Christians in Damasus, the man now known as Paul was the one chosen by God to do more for taking the good news of Jesus into the wider world than anyone else in the whole of history.

So, thinking again of that imaginary Church of Damascus prayer meeting, I'm challenged to consider how I pray, how we pray, when things are really tough. God had a surprise for the Christians in the 30s AD. Should we have more expectation that God might once again surprise us?

Rev'd Mike



Next Sunday we will be making Christingles.

NEXT SUNDAY 28.01.2024 Candlemas

10.30am in the Hall

READINGS: OT Malachi 3: 1-5
NT Hebrews 2: 14-18
GOSPEL John 2: 22-40



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St Thomas, Exeter

21st January 2024

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

10.30am in Hall

Today

10.30am in the Hall

Hymn Numbers

227 I come with joy, a child of God
122 Father, Lord of all creation
516 Through all the changing scenes of life

Tuesday 23rd January

7.30pm House Group at Helen's house.

Wednesday 24th January

10am Holy Communion (BCP)

2-4pm Young at Hearts

Thursday 25th January

9.30—11am St Thomas Tots

10.30-12.30pm Knit & Natter, 19 Maple Rd.

Details from Jenny 01392 498725

3-5pm Warm Space in the Hall

Friday 26th January

9.30am Morning Prayer

10am Staff Meeting

Saturday 27th January

12.30pm Ladies Lunch at the Royal Oak



Collect

Almighty God, whose Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of your saving presence: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Genesis 14: 17-20

After his return from the defeat of Chedorlamer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!' And Abram gave him one-tenth of everything.

Revelation 19: 6-10

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder-peals, crying out, 'Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure'—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' And he said to me, 'These are true words of God.' Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me,

'You must not do that! I am a fellow-servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

John 2: 1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

Post Communion

Almighty Father, whose Son our Saviour Jesus Christ is the light of the world: may your people, illumined by your word and sacraments, shine with the radiance of his glory,

that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; for he is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

NOTICES

Community Larder There will be a collection box in the hall on Sundays for food donations. The need remains great so please be mindful of our wider community.

Pioneering Parishes:

What: A series of four fortnightly webinars to help parishes start to move their energy outwards and become more pioneering.

When: Tuesday 9th January, Tuesday 23rd January, Tuesday 6 & Tuesday 20th February.

Time: 14.00-15.30.

Please refer to weekly email and/or speak to Fr David or Revd Sarah.

House Group will meet fortnightly from 9th January until 13th February in either Helen or John's house. Throughout Epiphany they will study the Book of Proverbs. Details from Mic, John or Ian.

