

Reflections for June 21st – 2nd Sunday after Trinity

Do not be afraid

We are all afraid of something. Many of us live with trivial anxieties, while some people find their lives seriously impaired by their fears. I have always struggled with a fear of heights, so I have never climbed any of our church towers, and I have never been able to see the spectacular views that other people have told me about.

During the restrictions we have all been living with recently, I am sure that some people have had a fear of being stuck at home, and not being able to go out and meet people and do things. Yet there will be others, in particular those who have been in isolation because of health concerns, who may find that they are fearful of the risks of going out, and starting to mix with other people again.

The gospel reading for this Sunday is quite a complex passage from Matthew chapter 10 that touches on various issues, but within it there is a theme of reassurance as Jesus repeats the phrase 'Do not be afraid'. He encourages his disciples not to fear the forces of evil (verse 26), or those who are prepared to use violence (verse 28), and not to be afraid that their needs may go unmet (verse 31), but instead to trust in God's loving care.

This assurance runs through the gospels, from the first words of the angel to the shepherds who are called to the birth of Jesus (Luke chapter 2 verse 10), to the words of the angel who meets the women disciples at the empty tomb after Jesus has risen (Matthew chapter 28 verse 5). On both occasions an angel says:

Do not be afraid.

And this reminds me of some words from the book of Isaiah, that offer a promise of God's loving care for his people, then and now, in the assurance that God can meet us, to heal and renew us, in the places where we struggle with our fears:

But now, this is what the Lord says – he who created you ... Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine.

(Isaiah chapter 43 verse 1)

Revd John Waller

Lord of life, take away from us every fear
except our awe and reverence for you,
so that we may be set free to live and serve you,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Bible readings for today: Jeremiah 20. 7-13; Romans 6. 1b-11; Matthew 10. 24-39