

Navigator to heaven (10 May 2015)

The selection of today's old and new testament readings is surely more than coincidental: no sooner has Isaiah declared how God's own word will go out into the earth to accomplish his purpose than Luke is recording the impact of the Holy Spirit upon a group of newly-faithful people. You can almost hear God murmuring in your ear '*don't you see it?*': if God was the sort of person to go 'ta-daah!', there would be a 'ta-daah' in the bible right here.

Isaiah's words foresee and are echoed by Jesus in his invitations to those who listen to him – come to me because what you already have does not feed you, does not build you up, does not satisfy you. Seek God and live – seek God who in his mercy will gladly receive and forgive you. Doesn't this sound familiar? Isaiah foresees the suffering servant king who will remake the relationship between God and humanity, who will become – to borrow a phrase from a song of Mike Oldfield and Jon Anderson (two of my musical heroes) – the navigator to heaven. In a world where humanity has upset what God originally created, the Holy Spirit calls us to turn things back the right way up. Jesus navigates the way for us.

What a promise of power we have heard this morning, so much more potent than the auctioneering promises and huckstering that we had been subjected to in past weeks as politicians sought to gain our attention by all sorts of bids for our support? God does not seek to tempt us with promises of spending on the pet cause of the moment, God does not seek to distract us with slagging off the opposition and demeaning those who we see as different. That is not his way. Let's be honest – if we are choosing our leaders on their ability to eat a bacon sandwich as the press would have had us believe then we have really got our priorities screwed up badly.

'Come to me, listen, that you may live ... Let them turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.'

And then we hear John continue after the imagery of the vine and branches that we heard of last week as Jesus speaks to his friends and disciples at the last supper. And we hear the great command to love one another as Jesus himself loved his friends – and as he now loves us. An outlook on and a commitment to one another that is radically different from how we have heard the politicians speaking of one another or of this or that group of society.

We have heard too much talk of the 'undeserving', of the poor, the unemployed, the voiceless or the weak as if they were worthless. That cannot be our way, our words, our thoughts. We belong to a God and a Saviour who has declared his love for us without distinction. He bids us remain in that love – and the response to that love is for us to make and to remake in this community and the wider world, through this communion, time and again as we struggle to live more fully the life that we are given. But there is no minimum wage in love, no mansion tax either – as in the parable of the vineyard owner and his workers hired throughout the day, the wages of love are the same for all of us whether newly come or long at labour – life and completeness of joy in God. Think back to what was said our readings: listen to me and eat what is good. You will delight in the richest of fare. Everyone has a vote in this choice, this election on whether to say 'yes' to Jesus – or not.

Will you follow the navigator?