**23rd September 2020 Morning Prayer**

Psalm 119:105-112

There are haunting phrases such as verse 105 "Your word ia a lamp to my feet and light for my path" that one instantly wants to remember and call to mind each day as we wake up and becomes an operning prayer "Accept, O Lord, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.

" Lord you know my weaknesses, how I can stray from your precepts" but "Your statutes are my heritage, they are the joy of my heart."These are words at the end of our day before we go to sleep. .

Collect for last Sunday "|Mathew - apostle and evangelist"

O almighty God,, who by thy blessed Son didst call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an apostle and evangelist: grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

The Book of Exodus, Chapter 15 verses 2-15

Briefly to return to Chapter 14

Trapped between the barrier of the Red Sea on one side and the Egyptian forces on the other, the panic stricken people were on the verge of revolting against Moses and going back to their miserable life under the control of the Egyptians.

"For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

The murmuring of the people becomes a frequent theme in the wilderness narratives and contrasts sharply with the indomitable faith of Moses, who believed that the Divine Warrior was fighting for the people. The divine imperative was "Tell the people of Israel to go forward."

Then comes the miraculous opening of a path through the waters within the poetry of Israel’s faith. Their intention was to glorify the God who had marvellously manifested his saving presence in an unforgettable historical experience.

A HOLY EVENT Chapter 15 verses 2-15

This narrative comes to a climax when it tells how Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron , took a tambourine and, while all the Israelite women followed her with music and dancing, she sang an ecstatic hymn of praise to Yahweh. These couplets are one of the oldest pieces of poetry in the Old Testament, and it is highly probably that the couplet originated during the very event it celebrates.

The divine name YHWH was based on a creative form of the verb "to be" - Yahweh "He causes to be, He "creates". So Yahweh emphasizes God’s creative activity, indicating natural phenomenon and historical events have their origin in the will of God who is Creator and Lord. It is an eye-witness testimony to an event that was experienced as a miracle at the time,

Israel experienced the occurrence as a "wonder" - an event that signified the redemptive activity of God on behalf of his people. A holy event which was for those, who participated in it, a glimpse of the sole power of God at work. Great turning points in religious history are based on the fact that again and again an individual and a group attached to God do wonder and keep on wondering at a natural phenomenon, at a historical event, or at both together. But always wondering at something which intervenes fatefully in the life of the individual or this group.

Israel’s capacity to wonder and keep on wondering is evident in various passages in the Old Testament, where the miracle of the Sea brings out rich overtones of meaning.

Exodus Chapter 14

Here the Song of Miriam, now transposed into the first person "I will sing", becomes the opening refrain of an ancient poem which celebrates the events reported in the dramatic prose of the poem. The poem is particularly significant because it expresses the transcendent and wonderful dimension of the event "at the Sea", drawing upon the motif of the Divine Warrior.

In the poem Yahweh’s adversaries are Pharoah and his armies; and the Sea is a passive element under Yahweh’s control. Yahweh’s victory was not over Pharoah’s powers of flesh and blood, but over the Sea, the symbol of chaos and evil that threatens the creation. To the Israelites who participated in this event and who passed on the story to their children, this was the most important news of the time. . And in its light they understood the subsequent events of their history. as well as their prehistory during the period of the Patriarchs,

REFLECTION

There is a mystery here, because right through the Bible this "exodus", meaning "going out", is seen as the work of God. It raises the puzzle of whether God uses bad things, that are going to happen anyway, to secure ultimately good results. We are drawn into deep philosophy about whether human beings have free will or whether God is all powerful. How can God influence things without robbing human beings of the power to choose good and reject evil?

Initially we should perhaps concentrate on reading the story and poem on its own terms.. It is about a caring, loving God that we honour, whom we trust and also give great and abundant thanks for His eternal promise and presence in our lives. A God we turn to at all times and remember to give thanks for His mercy and loving guidance. Indeed when what seems like disaster occurs, we must dig deep within ourselves for God’s guidance. It is believing in a God who, as well as being in this world is also beyond it; and God both orders it and cares for individuals in it.

What do we learn from this passage in the Book of Exodus?

We should persevere in prayer in spite of disappointments. Does God wish to test our confidence? Of course not, He knows perfectly well, but He may wish to deepen confidence and deepen our faith. The purpose of God’s delay may well be to detach our faith in Him from trust in our own judgement. .

However we are not to fall into the trap of thinking that because some of our prayers have been miraculously answered, that we can expect God to respond to all our bidding. Nevertheless there are occasions when the wonder of answered prayer does take place for our encouragement.

Indeed what God wants of us is not our ability but our availability. It is about what God can do through us as individuals when we are fully available and responsive to Him.

"By His power within us, He is able to do infinitely more than we ever dare to ask or imagine." It is not our ability or the lack of it, but our availability to God together with honour, trust and joy in God. That is the clue to all effective Christian action whether by individuals or by groups of Christians. God be with us in all that we do and say.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Dear God, even as we carry before us in faith the hope that the victory belongs to you, we are visited by doubts. We pray for the lifting of our life this day in new possibilities for the future, new visions of all that might be in a world where you have conquered the things of death. May your creative power flower into fruitfulness in the harsh deserts of our struggling life and precarious times, especially in these places. In our mind’s eye

let us take a flower and place it before the cross, as we pray for a particular hope in our life and in the life of loved ones.

May the roots of your faithfulness in the world spread down deeply into all the earth; that we may see the growing signs of your life in us in every place.

Prayers

for those who are ill, for those who have recently died

For those who are anxious and fearful, for the coming days and the steps taking us forward through this pandemic, for people across the world , and all who live in crowded cities. In crowded accomodation with no green and open spaces nearby, for families living in threatening circumstances.

We pray for those who govern here and across every nation, for all who give wise advice in leadership and in scientific knowledge to help us and give us confidence.

We hold before us all who are suffering, who are ill and distressed, and yearn for hope and comfort

We give thanks for our families and friends, for our church and the faithful ministry, Sunnyside and Bourne End, for the commitment of the whole team leading us forward in worship.

Bless us all with the company of Christ, O God, in our laughter and our tears, in our wisdom and faithfulness, in our pain and in our joy. Stay with us, loving God, this day and in the days to come as our saviour and friend. Amen.