**Wednesday 16th August 2020**

Read **Psalm 114** and **Exodus 14:19-31**

This is the word of the Lord

**Thanks be to God**

**Trusting God in the whole Journey**

**Psalm 114**

The Psalm begins with ‘When Israel went out of Egypt’, which sets the scene of what the psalmist is saying. It links well to the Exodus passage that we have been given in today’s reading. Israel’s deliverance from Egypt was the central act of redemption under the Old Covenant. It was to be constantly remembered and celebrated, and this song in Psalms joins in the celebration. Psalm 114 talks about the power and the majesty of God. As in other places in Hebrew poetry, the psalmist personified nature and described it as responding to God in fear or reverence. Here they mentioned the parting of waters at both the Red Sea and the Jordan River, at the beginning and end of Israel’s journey to the promised land. The psalmist seems to be describing events that occurred during the Exodus years which demonstrated God’s power over creation. When we think about the power of a large wave in the ocean or the majesty of a mountain top (I think of Snowdonia), then think of God’s greatness and glory, which are far more awesome than the natural wonders that we can see. These verses reminds us that the earth is his and in his hands. To tremble at God’s presence means to recognise God’s complete power and authority and our frailty in comparison.

Where have we been in awe of God’s creation this week? Take a moment to think about this and then compare this to God’s greatness and how much more awesome he is.

**Exodus 14:19-31**

This section from the Book of Exodus focusses on what most people under by ‘The Exodus’: the escape from Egypt and the crossing of the Red Sea. In the story so far we have been told about the oppression of the Israelites in Egypt. Moses has had an encounter with God at the burning bush, where God told Moses that he has heard the cry of the Israelites and will deliver them and bring them out of Egypt. Pharaoh refused to let the people go, so God brought ten plagues on Egypt. Pharaoh told Moses to take the people of Israel and leave Egypt. The people left Egypt, led by pillars of cloud and fire. But then God hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and Pharaoh led an army of “six hundred chariots chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt” to pursue the Israelites.

We arrive at the story with todays reading where the Israelites are on their journey to the promise land. They are still walking through the Red Sea but now the angel of God and the pillar of cloud have moved from the front, to being behind them. This isn’t just an ordinary cloud, but is the visible symbol of God’s presence in the midst of these people. The cloud was with them day and night. Did they need a visible presence more? Did they need to know he was with them always. Do we need to know today, more than ever, that God is with us?

The positioning of the cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptian army does a few things. It obscures the visibility so that the Israelites can no longer see the Egyptians and vice versa. This is significant because it removes sight of the approaching Egyptians which had caused the Israelites to be afraid (14:10). It also obscures the Egyptian’s from being able to see where they are going, or where the Israelites have gone. It shows the Israelites that God is taking an active role in Israel’s defence. Maybe they needed to know that God was protecting them. But this also showed the Egyptians that God is for Israel and against Egypt on this particular day.

Where are we needing his presence to be visible to us today or this week? To show us and remind us that he is with us, protecting us and watching over us. Take a moment to pause and think of where we need him, maybe in a certain situation or task that lies ahead.

It is a challenging ending to this section of Exodus. The Egyptians and Pharaoh didn’t fear God or listen to Moses’ plea, to let the people go. Despite all the plagues and harm that had come upon them, they still challenged the God of the Israelites and went to battle with him and his people. The death and destruction on the Egyptian army was brutal and it shows how disobedience and ignorance of God can be costly.

The death and destruction of the Egyptians also shows to the Israelites the power and might of their God. It says that they feared the Lord and as a result of all this they put their trust in him. God showed them that he was with them and then protected them against their enemies and brought them out of Egypt safely. Maybe before this they did not see him as their God or maybe being the only true God. But verse 31 seems to have compelled a change.

How has God shown his power in your life that has transformed your thinking or increased your faith?

As theIsraelites walked through the Red Sea they may have been thinking we will never make it to the promised land, this journey will be a disaster. The Egyptians will capture us and our journey to freedom will be over. How will we make it over to the other side, it seems impossible. But God went with them on this journey. He was with them the whole way.

We may be thinking this morning that God has forgotten about us, he has left us to tackle this difficult journey alone. But he is our guide and our strength. Just like he guided and gave Moses the strength to lead his people, he will guide and strengthen us during this different and difficult journey through COVID.

Think back to a time when God has shown his faithfulness to you. Share this story with someone today. We can, like the psalmist, look back to times in our life when God was faithful and revealed his glory and power to us. He is still faithful today.

How do these passages speak to us? What is God teaching us through them?

During a challenging time, a time of unknown how are we finding trusting in God during this part of our journey? Do we need, like the psalmist, to remember days when we saw clearly God’s hand at work?

What can we learn about God from these verse in Exodus, where he used Moses despite his weakness? Have you seen God at work, despite your own weaknesses and vulnerabilities?

**Collect for last Sunday**

Almighty God,

whose only Son has opened for us

a new and living way into your presence:

give us pure hearts and steadfast wills

to worship you in spirit and in truth;

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.

**Prayers**

* Those who are seriously ill with COVID and still suffering longterm and those who are looking after and supporting them. Keep praying for Rebecca and all those we know.
* For all who are struggling with their mental health and are feeling very anxious or fearful during these times. Pray for peace.
* Pray for all the children and, college and university students who have gone back. Pray for strength and peace as they begin to learn in a new way and new environment. Pray for the teachers and lecturers who have spent so much time adapting and changing how things have been done to make school a safe place. Give them energy and strength to keep going. Pray for protection over them all.
* Pray for comfort for those who have lost loved ones and are mourning. Loft up to God those we know and are close to our hearts.
* Pray for those asylum seekers and refugees who are living in unsafe places and are seeking a safe place and security. Give them wisdom and protection as they seek to find refuge. Also, thinking of those in Beirut who are still facing so many challenges.
* For those who are shielding and those feeling very alone and isolated.
* For all Key workers, that despite the changes in lockdown, are still working so hard to keep people safe and well. NHS workers, care workers and other key workers who continue to work hard. Pray for strength and endurance.
* Those working towards a vaccine for COVID. Pray for guidance and wisdom.
* For those who govern our country, Prime Minister and Cabinet and all MP’s who are guiding our nation at this time. For all world leaders, for wisdom in their decision making.
* Leaders of all Churches, including the Archbishop Justin, Bishop Alan and Bishop Michael and Bishop Richard. Pray for strength and wisdom as they figure out how to work with the new guidelines.
* Pray for refreshment and rest for Hilary and Steve while they are away on holiday.
* Prayer of thanks for God’s goodness and faithfulness in our journeys.

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,

to the mercy and protection of God.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers**

**for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**