

Sunday 2 November 2025

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts, be now and always acceptable to you O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

When we come to church, we have come here for various reasons. At one level, our first concern may be to do a task, such as giving out the service leaflet, getting the tea and biscuits ready, getting the candles lit, welcoming the visitors and so on. This is just the beginning of the various things that are necessary for a lively, meaning full and helpful church.

The most important thing is, however, not what we have been doing here, but our meeting with God. Sunday gives us the opportunity to sing his praises, to pray for those people and places that need God's presence and to rejoice in God's love and concern for each of us and those whom we love.

Our short reading from the book of Daniel is a story of one of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people. Our reading from the Book of Daniel is very short. It tells us of a dream that he had one night when he was confronted by four great beasts. The last of them was pretty scary as it sprouted 10 horns. At that point. Daniel turns away and sees the throne room of heaven and enters in. He is overwhelmed by its awesome splendour. There he discovers that the holy people of God will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever – yes, forever and ever. When I read that I wasn't sure what that meant. So, I turned to find a copy of a book on the life of Daniel. I must confess that I have not used it very often. So, when I found it, I was delighted to discover that it was written by one of my teachers at Trinity College Bristol, Joyce Baldwin. And as ever, she said something about the book of Daniel that is as true today as when she wrote it. She wrote, "The international scene is not, after all, out of hand, for it is God's hand and individual lives find their meeting in relation to his Kingdom. Those who pray sincerely 'Thy Kingdom come' lose themselves in a great cause and in the process find their own identity."

If we are to fulfil our identity, we need more information than we have so far heard this morning. This is where the reading from Luke 6: 20-31 comes in. Here we see Jesus choosing his men. It is interesting to see why he chose them, because it is for the same reasons and purposes that he still wants and needs people like us. Mark 3: 14 tells us that he chose them so that they might be with him. That means two things that are important.

First, he chose them to be his friends. It is amazing that Jesus needed friends, and these friends became his disciples. That word is best translated as a learner. Their task was to spend as much time as possible with Jesus, so they might learn to be like him. A Christian is someone whose whole life is spent learning about Jesus, so that we become like the men and women who got to know Jesus. Jesus chose them to be apostles, as well. The Greek word *apostolos* means someone who is sent out to do a job. Every day we go out into a society that is turning its back on God. The collapse of both the Protestant Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche*) and the Roman Catholic Church is huge.

I bumped into an old friend in the local supermarket on Thursday. Dirk is not only our electrician, but he has been very involved in the local Protestant church. I haven't seen him

lately so I used the opportunity to ask him how things were going in his church. His reply was chronic. There are 4 churches near him and instead of a weekly service, each village now has a service once a month. So, if you want to go to church, you can go to your local church once and then the other 3 weeks, you have to go to three different churches about 8 miles apart. If that was not enough of a problem, the kindergarten, which was in his village and belonged to the church, has been sold off to the state. My friend is now going to a church in a town.

Such difficult times have happened in the past. It is our task to do what we can in this city, once renowned for the churches and the Christian university. At first thought, you might think that our church is more likely to suffer than the German churches. Of course, that could be our future. On the other hand, we have a great collection of people from all over the world. In other parts of the world most of the Anglican churches are growing rapidly. This vitality and commitment should be our hallmark, our desire. Then and only then can we be of service, not simply to a few, but also to this city. That, of course, won't come overnight, but by God's grace, we shall overcome. It will take time and energy, understanding and courage. But "deep in our hearts we do believe that we shall overcome some day".