

MONDAY**29 JUNE****Peter and Paul,
Apostles****Zechariah 4:1-6a.****10b-end****or Acts 12:1-11****Psalms 125****Acts 12:1-11 or****2 Timothy 4:6-8.****17-18****Matthew 16:13-19****TUESDAY****30 JUNE****Amos 3:1-8; 4:11-12****Psalms 5:8-end****Matthew 8:23-27****WEDNESDAY****1 JULY****Amos 5:14-15. 21-24****Psalms 50:7-14****Matthew 8:28-end****THURSDAY****2 JULY****Amos 7:10-end****Psalms 19:7-10****Matthew 9:1-8****FRIDAY****3 JULY****Thomas****the Apostle****Habakkuk 2:1-4****Psalms 31:1-6****Ephesians 2:19-end****John 20:24-29****SATURDAY****4 JULY****Amos 9:11-end****Psalms 85:8-end****Matthew 9:14-17**

REFLECTION

Jesus deals with a lot of fearful situations. The disciples were beside themselves when he was asleep in the boat in the midst of a raging

storm. Their terror was replaced by astonishment when it ceased on his command. Then he healed the Gadarene demoniacs who were causing people to make detours to keep out of their way because they were so fierce. But the healing process involved sending the demons into a herd of pigs, which ran over a cliff edge. It frightened the townspeople so much that they begged Jesus to go away. The next story, in which Jesus heals a paralytic after first telling him his sins are forgiven, might seem less frightening, but the idea that anyone could forgive sins really upset the scribes. If our long-held views or prejudices are challenged it often causes anger, a reaction to our fear.

The lesson we could learn is, "always expect the unexpected". Following Jesus when he was on earth involved constant surprises and challenges. It is no different for us. If we have the courage, the adventure that is faith will enrich our lives in unexpected ways.

PRAYER

Give us courage, Lord, to follow you.
May Christ be our inspiration and, believing in him,
may we experience everything you have planned
for our lives with trust,
enjoying the challenges and the gifts along the way.



THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

PART XXIII – ISAIAH – A BOOK OF VITAL LESSONS

Richard Greatrex continues our book-by-book series about the Bible.

Isaiah, which opens a fifteen-book collection of the later prophets, is one of our most compositionally complex biblical texts. Spanning a timeframe that covers the late eighth century BC, when Assyria was ascendant, through Babylonian control into Persian rule, it poses scholars with numerous questions regarding its formation. Some insist that it is all derived from an eighth-century Jerusalem prophet to Kings Ahaz and Hezekiah. Others detect the hand of two authors or editors (chapters 1-39 and 40-66), while a few even see three, contending that Chapters 1-39 are addressed to Jerusalem inhabitants, 40-55 to exiles in Babylon and 56-66 to the restored Jewish people. However, although specific themes and styles dominate each section, many of these are discernible throughout the entire book.

God is known explicitly in Isaiah as the Holy One of Israel, concerned for both Ephraim and Judah, the Lord who will judge and restore Zion. Speaking to both present and future listeners, the prophet insists that the political and religious Jerusalem elites carry a profound ethical responsibility for all those whom they govern; matters of social justice are high on his agenda. Jesus, who cites Isaiah eight times, also places social justice at the heart of his mission. Additionally, the early Church found in the Servant Songs (Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13 – 53:12) is not just an example of sacrificial living but of direct, prophetic witness to Christ's life and suffering.

In one of those songs the servant is given as "a light to the nations"; that God's salvation may reach the ends of the earth, a recurring theme in Chapters 40-66, seized upon by the early Church when the new faith began to spread beyond Judaism.

Isaiah became so important a text for Christians that it was known as the Gospel in the Old Testament, teaching vital lessons about faithfulness, sacrificial service, inclusiveness and social justice as essential elements of a God-centred life.

Richard Greatrex is a parish priest, bookseller and author from Somerset.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU
THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
Caroline Hodgson
and
Heather Smith



Third week after Trinity

Monday 29 June to
Saturday 4 July
2020

WEEK