

Sermons at All Saints Anglican Church of Luxembourg

Preached by Rev Geoff Read on Sunday 14th July 2024

Bible: Mark 6;14ff, Ephesians 1;3-14

So what is it?

What ever it is, we read in the gospel reading from Mark King Herod had heard of it

Others too

Some said it was Elijah is here, others a prophet is here,

Others, including King Herod, thought it was John the Baptist had risen from the dead

What is it?

It is all that St Paul is talking about in the first reading

What he calls being blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ (v3), the choosing and adoption of vv4-5, the redemption, forgiveness, the lavishing of God's grace, the making known of the mystery of God's will, the plan to gather up all things in Christ

That's the big picture of the It King Herod

Its what is going on in the heavenly places, God's Big Plan, that becomes visible, implemented, experienced as Jesus slips into time and history

It is in an out of the way corner of the Roman empire that the It takes place

Read back in Mark 6 and it is all we saw last week

Jesus bringing God's Big Picture into the lives of individuals and a small community as he preaches, heals and shows God's freedom

As He joins in with what His Father in heaven is doing Jesus then sends out the 12 disciples to join in with what He is doing

That's the It

The laser like wisdom and truth of His teaching

The deeds of power that change lives

With that comes both acceptance and rejection by others, including the authorities like Herod

In our gospel reading we read of the chilling cost for some of joining in with Jesus, the penalty His cousin John pays for calling out Herod's abuse of power, whose pride and vanity finds him tricked by a teenager into executing John

That costly It will play out in Jesus' own life as he too is arrested, tried and executed

So too for all the remaining 11 disciples and many more

The It is the point where heaven and earth intersect

It is where disciples then and now pray and then seek to live the words "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven ..."

It is where we declare each Sunday: the Lord is here: **His Spirit is with us**

It is where ordinary all saints allow ourselves to be restored and re-storied day by day, Sunday by Sunday

2000 years ago it was happening in CI Palestine

It is happening there 2000 years later as the local Christian church there is empowered by Jesus to join in with what He is doing amidst the rubble and destruction:

- speaks Jesus laser-like truth and wisdom
- prays with expectation that His deeds of power will feed, heal, enable ordinary Christians to call for justice and peace not out of the place of hatred and bitterness, but love and pity

All of that focused, incarnated, practical It is where heaven touches earth

It is where the Big Story of God in Ephesians is allowed to enter into the suffering in the place and begin to work in the place in history described in Mark

The language Paul uses in Ephesians I is so extravagant

In fact, in the original Greek there is no punctuation – he takes this huge breath and gushes forth the goodness of good –

- its **every** spiritual blessing
- destined according to His **good** pleasure and will
- all is **freely** bestowed
- The **riches** of His grace
- lavished upon us
- **all** wisdom and insight
- He is gathering up **all** things
- all is destined according to the purposes of the one who accomplishes **all** things

And so it goes on

This lavish, abundant love of God touches the particularity of our lives and the lives of others, our context, the here and now of our homes, workplaces, communities and church as the people of God seek to recognise, discern what Jesus is doing and then join in

Many here felt that particularity as you were prayed for and anointed on the Sanctuary Day or the Sunday services – a word, the start of a transformation just right for your need

What does this look like?

I think I may have told this before – if so, forgive me

It's back in 1988, the year I was ordained and began my curacy like Alison does today

Throughout my childhood and adult life my mother struggled with mental health issues of anxiety and depression

In the 1970s onwards it was treated with Ativan, a highly addictive drug

So not only were people depressed and anxious: but addicted too

Shortly after I was ordained my Mum had a major collapse and was hospitalised in a secure unit

I went to visit her and remember sitting opposite her in a bleak visiting room. I longed to pray for her, but a simple prayer like God bless Mum seemed inadequate to bring about all I longed for for my Mum – health and healing from the depression and also freedom from the addiction

But thanks be to God – the Holy Spirit takes our love and our longings and that longing for His More even when we are praying with a wavering faith spoken out loud in a simple prayer

What happened is that they immediately found a non-addictive alternative drug cocktail that stabilised her and enabled her to begin talking therapy

She was not completely healed of her mental health issues. But I do believe God was healing her with long periods of freedom, independent living, and ways to resist the anxiety and depression that was the result of childhood damage

As we join in with what Jesus is doing, the “It”, the Holy Spirit takes that desire and prayer and does great things

Bringing the abundance of God’s Big Story, the power of the cross and resurrection and touching earth as it is in heaven

No wonder King Herod was perturbed

For, as it says, Jesus name had become known (v14)

The power, the authority of Jesus that is all about joining in with what He is doing in our here and now

Which is why Christian pray “in the name of Jesus”

That is why we end our prayers like that: in Jesus name we pray

It is about seeking to discern what He is doing and joining in

Not out of our own strength, love and power – but His

So just like last week I want ask: where has Jesus placed you

What are the pains and needs you are aware of there

And what is the It?

How is Jesus already at work, known, and inviting you to join in?