

Sunday, May 30th 2021. Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6. 1-8, Psalm 29, John 3. 1-17

In the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Do we ever have a vision? Have there been people during our lives, who have been role-models, people, who have inspired us? My Sixth Form master, Mr. Nicholls, was an inspiration, an excellent teacher, who gave me my passion for French. Such people give us vision. Sometimes we have a vision of a way, which we hadn't expected. I once had a pupil, who went into insurance after university. He came back to school one day and said that he wasn't too happy. I said, "I knew that you wouldn't like it. You are a teacher!" He went to teach at Lancing and then Westminster School and never looked back!

In today's first reading, Isaiah has a tremendous vision of God, which bowls him over. The vision touches all the senses. He sees and hears God, he smells the smoke, he feels a burning coal touching his mouth. The presence of God shakes like an earthquake. Here is Isaiah's call to be a prophet.

Psalm 29 also contains a strong vision. The heavenly beings are to praise the glory of God's presence:

'Ascribe to the Lord, you powers of heaven, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.'

As with Isaiah, the voice of the Lord is heard:

'The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders.'

In the end, the congregation prays to God:

'The Lord shall give strength to his people; the Lord will give his people the blessing of peace.'

Here, then, are visions of God ruling in majesty, enabling us to look beyond ourselves, a source of inspiration.

But then God comes to earth in Jesus, to show us, like a parent, that we are loved, to teach us how to live, how to relate to other people, how to care for others, how to be servants one of another, what being human really means.

We can't do it alone. We need some help. As we go through life, we often need the help of other people. First of all, our parents as we grow up, then our teachers, and later on in a new job we shall need the help and support of experienced colleagues. So, Jesus promises the disciples that he will send them the Holy Spirit to support them, to give them the energy to do what he is asking of them.

In the Gospel Nicodemus has a meeting with Jesus. He is a distinguished Pharisee, a member of the council of the Sanhedrin.

He seems to have been attracted by what Jesus did and taught, and his attitude is more liberal than that of many of the Pharisees. There is no evidence that he is a secret believer, but he is changed by his encounter with Jesus. He seems to have had a certain vision. Later on, at a difficult council meeting, he defends Jesus against false accusations, saying:

‘Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?’

The conversation with Jesus is marked by mutual respect, but Nicodemus does not understand what Jesus is talking about and fades out half way through, when Jesus moves the discussion on to a new level, saying that we have to be reborn through the operation of the Holy Spirit, and that this is possible only through belief in him. The Holy Spirit is often expressed by breath or wind. Spirit comes from the Latin to breathe; it can be seen in the French *respirer* and in the word inspiration. So, the Spirit is the source of energy and inspiration.

Isaiah accepts the call to be a prophet. But in the next bit he is told that he is to preach to a people who won't listen; Jerusalem will be destroyed and the people will go into exile. He will have to preach a hard message.

Trinity Sunday proclaims that God is present in all life, the ordinary as well as the special. God is present, whether we are in a difficult meeting like Nicodemus and having to argue for things which we feel are important, having unhelpful conversations with people, who won't listen, or having to say unpopular things, as Isaiah had to do.

All these things happen in everyday life. Trinity Sunday sends us out into the ordinary, the green season, proclaiming that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit is there, present with us.

We have heard the story. Now we learn to be the people of God and the story becomes our story. Can we see the action of God's Spirit? Do we receive a vision of glory in what happens every day; do we see examples of love and hope? What about all those, who, inspired by Captain Sir Tom Moore, have gone to great lengths to raise money for good causes or those, who have helped others during the pandemic? Can we see in this the presence of God in ordinary life?

If we can, as for Isaiah and Nicodemus, it will inspire and change us, too. That is why Trinity Sunday is the Sunday of vision and inspiration.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

