

St John the Evangelist, Poulton

30th June 2020

Tuesday of the 13th Week of the Year

(Fifteenth Tuesday of Isolation)

Sign on at: saintjohnpoulton@gmail.com



Thanks to those who replied to my last scripture reflection with your own thoughts – if you want to be taken off the email list, or know anyone who may appreciate the contact, please let me know – or print it for a neighbour. (If you have only just started to receive these daily reflections it is because I have only just found your address, sorry) Thanks. Fr Peter.

Note from Fr Peter: A full list of Deanery church opening (which have been sent to me) are below

(Daily Scripture is available from www.universalis.com)

Amos 3:1-8,4:11-12

Listen, sons of Israel, to this oracle the Lord speaks against you, against the whole family I brought out of the land of Egypt:

You alone, of all the families of earth, have I acknowledged, therefore it is for all your sins that I mean to punish you.

Do two men take the road together if they have not planned to do so?

Does the lion roar in the jungle if no prey has been found?

Does the young lion growl in his lair if he has captured nothing?

Does the bird fall to the ground if no trap has been set?

Does the snare spring up from the ground if nothing has been caught?

Does the trumpet sound in the city without the populace becoming alarmed?

Does misfortune come to a city if the Lord has not sent it?

No more does the Lord do anything without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets.

The lion roars: who can help feeling afraid?

The Lord speaks: who can refuse to prophesy?

I overthrew you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a brand snatched from the blaze; and yet you never came back to me.

It is the Lord who speaks.

This therefore, Israel, is what I plan to do to you,

and because I am going to do this to you,

Israel, prepare to meet your God!

Matthew 8:23-27

Jesus got into the boat followed by his disciples. Without warning a storm broke over the lake, so violent that the waves were breaking right over the boat. But he was asleep. So they went to him and woke him saying, 'Save us, Lord, we are going down!' And he said to them, 'Why are you so frightened, you men of little faith?' And with that he stood up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and all was calm again. The men were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him.'

(What is God saying to you as you hear his Word here?)

I'm sorry about this, but I need to get it out of my head!:

Knock, knock. Amos A Mosquito
Knock, knock. Anna an' another mosquito
Knock, knock. Ellen 'ell, another mosquito!

If you imagine the land around Jerusalem (or look at a map) it is not difficult to notice that south of the city the land quickly turns to desert. However, as you travel North from Jerusalem the world becomes greener, more populated and wealthy. Throughout the Bible it is a general rule that the North contains powerful countries, wealth and, often, sinfulness – the South signifies nothingness, poverty, but, often, the place where people are not distracted from hearing God. (Bethlehem is only about 8Km south of Jerusalem and Jerusalem can be seen from Bethlehem on a clear day – but it is poor, and surrounded by desert) This division is also true for the two kingdoms of Israel (north) and Judah (south). (It's the opposite of our situation of the "South East" and the "Northern Powerhouse"!)

As we have begun to recognise the north was, in becoming rich and powerful, neglectful of God. God wishes to remind the people of Israel that they have forgotten where they came from and ignored working with him.

Prophets often come with qualifications of a good family line or a priestly background. To speak to the people of the North the qualification God saw was firstly that he needed someone who came from the South! Now, imagine how that went down in Israel!

God's second qualification was that this prophet was.... Unknown! Amos was from the South, from Judah, but all we know of him is that he starts his book with: "*The words of Amos, one of the shepherds of Tekoa*" (Amos 1:1). Tekoa is about 6.5Km south of Bethlehem. Later Amos will tell us he: "*was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees*" – The Figs grow wild and produced a good food for poor people if cared for.

However we know nothing of Amos's past or family background. But this is the point. He was not afraid to tell his listeners that he was not trained or experienced as a Prophet. He was not coming to speak for any reason than that he was asked to speak to them by God – and so he felt had to do it. In his book he recounts that the priest in Bethel, Israel, had confronted him as to who he thinks he is – and then reports him to the King. When asked Amos answers:

*"I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. **But Yahweh, the Lord, took me from tending the flock and Yahweh, the Lord, said who to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'**"*

The work of Amos was not easy and it is not surprising that a Hebrew translation of his name is "Burden Messenger".

As we open up the development of God's message to the people of Israel it is worth reflecting on the fact that at Baptism we are all anointed Prophets of God. We are called to speak God's care and concerns for his people and his world. But we can take courage from Amos in times when we think: "I can't do that" or "I have no training" or "but I'm just a keeper of Sycamores"! You will all have been surprised at times when people have thanked you for your faith comment particularly because you have no training – but you obviously do have

experience and knowledge of God. It is worth using opportunities for training to help us understand – but don't forget to notice and thank God for your faith and calling as a prophet.

In today's passage God speaks through Amos very gently to start with reminding the people of how God has agreed to work with his people:

"Do two men take the road together if they have not planned to do so?"

"No more does the Lord do anything without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets"

It all feels, to me, like the way your mum tells you how much she loves you – but you know you are going to be told off! ("this hurts me more than it hurts you" etc) and so the telling off **will** come to Israel through the Prophet Amos.

A message from Matthew: It is interesting that the disciples in the boat were ready to turn to Jesus when the threat of storm arises. But the Israelites were not even aware that they had neglected God – not only was there no storm, but they were living a, seemingly, secure, wealthy and inward looking life. There is a danger that, when life is good, we do not perceive a need for God walking beside us – but a "storm" helps us work together with God.

The men were astounded and said, 'Whatever kind of man is this? Even the winds and the sea obey him.'



Bethlehem

Jerusalem

Bethlehem and Jerusalem

Photograph taken from the archaeological remains of "The Herodion" – Herod the Great's summer palace from which he could receive 'light' messages from Jerusalem.

The Herodion is interesting because it was built just before Jesus' time causing great alarm, and possibly was the reality behind Jesus' comments on "if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

It was a new mountain built by Herod. This site is worth looking up – not to mention visiting (not this week! – though I notice it is open!)

"Jesus asks His disciples to take the demands of the Gospel seriously, even when that requires sacrifice and effort... He says: "Whoever loves father or mother [...] son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (v. 37). Jesus certainly does not intend to undervalue love for parents and children, but He knows that family bonds, if put in first place, can deviate from the true good...All of us can give many examples in this regard, not to mention those situations in which family affections are intermingled with choices that are contrary to the Gospel. When, instead, love toward parents and children is inspired and purified by love for the Lord, it then becomes totally fruitful and produces fruit for the good of the family itself as well as beyond it. Jesus says this phrase with this meaning...The true love of Jesus requires a true love of parents and children, but to seek out family interests first always leads to the wrong path."

Pope Francis
ANGELUS PRAYER JUNE 28, 2020

PARISH NOTICES:

- *To date the Fylde coast has seen 1,819 COVID-positive patients with 18 patients currently being treated as inpatients. As of 5pm on **June 19th**, the Trust had reported 223 deaths. A total of 408 patients from across the Fylde coast have been discharged.*
- **Re-opening of St John's Church for private prayer**
St John's is to be open from 11.00am to 1.00pm on Wednesdays and Saturdays with the agreed arrangements and a limited number of people – great thanks to Cath Morgan and our volunteer stewards.
Please note that, if you come you will have to declare you are not in a vulnerable sector of society and that you have no flu-like symptoms. Please remember all the descriptions below are for the safety of OTHERS as well as you.
 - Due to the 2 metre distancing there will be a maximum number entering at any time and individuals must enter and sit apart ("Households" can stay together)
 - There will be an indicated "One way" route around church to the exit.
 - Parish Stewards will guide you to hand sanitiser and benches
 - Benches will be sanitised after each use.
 - There will be no books provided – please bring your own prayer aids.
 - We are not allowed to provide toilet facilities.
 - We are not allowed anything which is openly "devotional" (gatherings of people, shared prayer, etc) or items which can be touched (relics, votive candles etc)
 - If you wish to wear a mask please provide your own.
 - If you have flu-like symptoms, or are in a "vulnerable" category please stay at home.

St Martin & Hilda's open for private prayer

Our chapel will be open for private prayer on Wednesdays from **9.30am to 12.30pm** from next week. Great thanks to Joan Swan for organising this under the safeguarding guidelines of the Church of England and the responsibility of the Vicar of St Chad's.

If you wish to offer any help please contact Joan on 07887 880497

- **Know any parishioners housebound or who may need contacting?** - At the start of this lockdown a number of parishioners offered to find a way of being help to those parishioners who are in need or just housebound. Many people are in contact with the parish through this email or the WhatsApp group, but you may think of some who are not getting parish contacts – but they may get family support and food. If you have suggestions please email their names and addresses to the parish address and we can get parishioners to drop a message in to them. Thanks.
- **Local COVID19 Helplines** *(Official message from our Parish Organisers)*
The Wyre Council have a dedicated helpline for COVID19 isolation support. If you are struggling to get essential items, or need help, please ring 01253 891000 and select OPTION 7 when prompted. Alternatively, if you have access to the internet, you can fill in the online request for help here: https://www.wyre.gov.uk/forms/form/257/en/coronavirus_isolation_support_form

There is also another local network being organised by the Methodist Church - called POULTONCAN. The helpline there is 01253 670800 between 8am and 10pm, 7 days a week.

We have a group of parish volunteers who are going to be working with the council to respond to requests. If anyone would like to offer help, please email Jenny at jennifer.hillman.sutcliffe@gmail.com or telephone on 07568502749.
- **Parish WhatsApp Group:** Emily Halliwell (as part of the above group) has set up a closed parish WhatsApp account. I have finally been beaten into joining but am a bit of a WhatsApp virgin as yet! Emily says: "My number is 07969643648 if you want to be added just reply with your mobile number or text me."

- **Local Bakery Offer:** Jane and Andrew Neal, who are always so generous to us by offering bread and cakes at parish social events, are offering delivered bakery goods to those who are in isolation or ill. However they also offer a “click-and -collect” service (You can stop outside the shop in Cleveleys) for those who have transport. You can order on line at neals-familybakery.co.uk
- Lancashire and South Cumbria website for current details on Hospitals & Corona Virus
<https://www.healthierlsc.co.uk/coronavirus>

**Opening Times of churches
within our Deanery:**

St John’s, Poulton will be open:
Wednesdays 11.00am – 1.00pm
Saturdays 11.00am – 1.00pm

Ss Hilda & Martin’s Chapel:
Wednesdays 9.30am – 12.30pm

St Wulstan's Fleetwood: will be open:
10.00am -12.00noon on
Monday, Wednesday and Friday
14.00pm -18.00pm on
Tuesday and Thursday

St. Teresas Cleveleys: will be open:
Saturdays 10 am - 12 noon
Wednesdays 10 am - 12 noon

Sacred Heart, Thornton
Fridays 11am-12noon
Sundays 11am-12noon

St Mary’s, Fleetwood: (No information)

English Martyrs’, Hardhorn:
Not opening for Private Prayer

Thoughts contributed by Virus Times' readers:

(A few of anonymous responses from these Virus Times Reflections from our parishioners: Thanks to contributors.)

You mentioned that many don't see the relevance of the Old Testament. Perhaps that is because they have been given a narrow view of history, the sort often badly taught at school, dates, kings and big events. Your descriptions of history of course necessitate using all those things to provide context but the beauty for me is that you get to the heart of history - that is making sense of it all, understanding and relaying the human condition. What the people were thinking, and why, gives a richness to their actions. Crucially, Father, your gift is to further explain how these human experiences were in many ways secondary to the main purpose of the Old (and New) Testament and that is to reveal the Word of God. Now it is starting to make sense to me and in a way that I believe it can be understood by putting us, the reader, into the shoes of the Israelites to whom God reveals his wishes. The same messages, before Christ, now gain relevance for us as much as the New Testament. So for me the lockdown has turned into something of a retreat. Scripture development for sure but like either ends of a bookcase my mind is constantly drawn to two prayers in the Mass.....in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done and what I HAVE FAILED TO DO.....and my favourite prayer 'Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed'.

Re Bony M 1978. 1978 was a fabulous year for me, the only blot was that awful song, Rivers of Babylon. Roll forward 42 years and I think it's fresh, tuneful and of course biblical, I love it. Does that mean I have become wiser with age, or was I always an opinionated so-and-so?

Thank you again for the sensitive and understanding approach to the importance of the Temple for the Jewish people.

It struck me what an enormous intellectual, emotional and spiritual leap that Paul had to make when he wrote: "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" 1 Corinthians 6:19

The brand-new temple that had just recently been completed was for Paul, who was in his own words one of the strictest adherents of the Jewish Law, now redundant.

As you remind us, at the death of Jesus, the curtain in the Temple that kept all the people separate from entering the Holy of Holies was torn apart. For Paul, we now are no longer have the need for a place where we can find God - because it is "in God that we live and move and have our being."

Jesus says it in another way: "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him."

Has the lockdown enabled us to begin to grasp in a deeper way this understanding? If it has then, when we return to the church building, we will recognise God as present in his people who are gathered, at the invitation of Jesus, to take part in an act of thanksgiving (a Eucharist) to God the Father for what Jesus has made possible. We will then have reached the great understanding that Paul expressed so vividly: we are indeed the temples of the Holy Spirit.

People being prayed for by our parish groups:

Maureen Brown	Maureen was taken into Victoria after a couple of 'incident'. She slept well last night, has had a 'clear' and is speaking better today. I am sure she will appreciate our prayers. I have sent your love to her.
Various Older People we worry about	Whilst we are enjoying the promise of loosening lockdown we still have concerns for relations and friends who have signs of Covid-19 and who have been taken to Hospital. Please pray for these people – and for those we don't know as well.
Louie aged 13	The neighbour of a parishioner who has Leukaemia who is having a sudden set back. Prayer, please
From Jayne Clark	Could I please ask that our parishioners pray for all the staff in children's social care who are still working to safeguard children in our area and around the country. It never ceases to amaze me how hard they work generally, despite the abuse that they often are subjected to, but more so currently given the extra risk that they are putting themselves under to visit the vulnerable.
Maureen O'Connell & Family(Not Covid-19)	Mrs Donnelly's Mum
Paul Sharrock (Not Covid-19) (and family: Kathryn, Mary & Rachael)	Your prayer of healing for Paul is remarkable –Paul has now been moved to a specialised rehabilitation hospital where more serious physiotherapy can be offered and better connection with his family which has been very painful during lockdown. Please remember his wife & family at this time. <i>Fr Peter</i>
Parents home schooling AND home job-ing	Thank God for our parents
Our Teachers	Who are at school or preparing work for our children
Hugh (Not Covid-19)	The brother of Emma, a friend of mine (Fr Peter), who has been found to have cancer only recently. He has three young children. Prayers Please

