

**OT: Jeremiah 31:7-9**

**NT: Hebrews 7:23-28**

**Gp: Mark 10:46-52**

Some years ago now, I used to listen to stories by the American writer, Garrison Keillor, on Radio 4. The stories were all about a fictional town, Lake Wobegon, and set in Keillor's home state of Minnesota. It was usual for the monologue to begin with the ironic phrase, 'It's been another quiet week in Lake Wobegon' and then Garrison Keillor would go on to relate the many things that had actually happened that week.

I tell you this because, one, the stories remain entertaining if you can find them and two, you could replace the opening 'Lake Wobegon', with Liverpool Parish Church!

The work doesn't stop and the requests for various services keep coming in. And it's not just the priests who are busy, the Wardens and Deputy Warden are hard at it and we would all be lost without Jean in the office who even has people wanting to book Carol Services for 2025.

Thanks be to God that Liverpool Parish Church is alive and thriving and that so many people see it as an important part of their lives from annual remembrance services to weddings and funerals and even the blessing of ships.

Following on from Fr Yazid's sermon last week, we have been saved by the Resurrection of Jesus but our salvation also depends on our response to that good news. The Resurrection, though done once and for all, demands an action in reply, a commitment to work for the kingdom of God, to carry out the task of spreading the gospel and nurturing God's people. This is a call we have all received since we have all been saved. But it cannot depend on our own strength alone since by definition we are frail humans subject to sin and worldly distractions.

As the hymn says:

*With many a conflict, many a doubt,  
Fightings within, and fears without,*

The blind beggar in today's gospel reading reflects this. His lack of sight being a metaphor for all human weakness. But this blind man also had insight. He knew that he could not be complete, could not fulfil his calling without the help of God. And so he calls out a prayer, which has become known as the Jesus Prayer: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!*

And he won't be silenced, he keeps calling out: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!* until Jesus calls him and asks what he wants from him. And by his faith, the man is healed and responds by following Jesus.

It is only by the grace and mercy of God that we are able to go on. We live by his strength and not our own. We fool ourselves if we think that we are self-sufficient. We forget that we are but dust without the breath of God within us.

This afternoon is the annual service of remembrance and thanksgiving for the Parachute Regiment Association. We will also be keeping the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Operation Market Garden at Arnhem which was a significant step in the liberation of Holland from the Nazis. They have chosen another reading which confirms our need of God's strength.

As Isaiah wrote:

*He gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,*

No matter their fitness, their training, they too have a belief that it is the power of God which enables the achievement of so much. Hopefully not many of us will ever have to jump out of an aeroplane, at least not behind enemy lines. And hopefully too the opening words from today's reading from the letter to the Hebrews won't be fulfilled just yet!

*the former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office*

But each of us has a calling to fulfil, each of us faces stresses and strains in our lives and some will face particularly difficult challenges. If we put aside ourselves, if we cling to God and place ourselves in his hands, we can tap into a strength beyond our imagining, we can achieve what he calls us to do.

With God too, we don't have to put on a brave face. We can be honest about our weaknesses, our worries, our fear of failing. In him we can be complete, in him we will survive whatever life throws at us, even if to others it looks like defeat. After all, the cross is a strange symbol of triumph. In him we are loved and cherished as we are and in him we have access to strength and riches greater than this world knows.

*Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
Yea all I need, in thee to find.*

When a priest makes the commitments at Ordination, the response each time is: *With the help of God, I will.*

May this be our mantra through life.

**The Revd Michelle Montrose**