

Sunday Thought

6th June 2021 10th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

1 Samuel 8: 4 - 20

Psalm 138

2 Corinthians 4: 13 - 51

Mark 3: 20 - 35

A Work in Progress



For many people this Sunday may be *Back to Church Sunday*. *Not quite as usual because of distancing, masks, sanitisers and NO hugs!* Some of us will be thinking of further changes. After months not being in church or of worshipping alone in front of a screenful of other faces, we may be asking ourselves, *'What's it all about? What have we been doing here over the years for the Kingdom of God? Do we really want to return to more of the same?'* We shall pray about it but let's be careful what we pray for!

That is what God said to Samuel in our Old Testament reading today. It was a time of change for God's people. Settled in their new land they were becoming prosperous and powerfully self-sufficient. Now, the people wanted a king – *'We are God's people but why can't we be like every other nation and have a king to rule us instead of priests and judges?'* Religion was at the heart of their dissatisfaction – Samuel, their prophet and leader was getting old – his sons had *lost the plot* and were not respected as worthy successors– religious practice was considered *out of date* and not averse to scandal and corruption.

Samuel sought God's guidance and in his divine wisdom the Lord does not say *'No'*. He does say, *'Consider carefully the change you're asking for! Do you really want a king to take charge of your personal lives –your daily work, your social interactions, your politics, your religious life, compelling your allegiance in war as in peace? Yes, it is time for change but be sure not to leave Me out!'*

The Gospel reading from Mark is concerned with another time of change for God's people. It comes at the height of the Jesus revolution when ordinary people were flocking to him from all over Judaea, Galilee, the Jordan Valley and beyond. A considerable number of religious leaders were among them, fearing a challenge to their authority and the established teaching and practices. Jesus' challenge to change was met by a familiar response – *He's out of his mind! Religious mania! He's not eating properly! He's got the devil in him! What are his family thinking about?*

Mary and the family do catch up with Jesus and he uses their arrival as an illustration. *'You're all family!'* he tells his hearers, explaining how the Kingdom of God is not about powerful rulers and entrenched religious practices but about being in God's family with him as Father. We must welcome change in our churches. It is happening all the time just as it is in every natural family. We grow up! - even in our later years! We move out! We widen the family and reshape it with new relationships. However, in the Kingdom family God is still our loving, grace-full *Father. Or is it Mother?*

An advantage of not going out to church on Sunday morning has been opportunity to hear radio programmes – like Desert Island Discs last week. The castaway was Amanda Khozi Mukwashi the Director of *Christian Aid*. She gave a wonderful testimony of her Christian experience. She spoke clearly of how her faith and hope in Jesus were the inspiration and strength for all her work towards making the world more like the Kingdom of God, especially for its poorest and most underprivileged people. Amanda referred to her life as *'A work of God in progress'*. That is true for every Christian and for every church at this time, as we continually prepare to move into *God's new things*.

It is all a matter of living by faith, as Paul writes in his letter to Corinth. We join in God's work in progress in our lives, in the church, in the world, because we trust in Jesus to renew us in his spirit day by day. We're not discouraged by change because we know our future here and in heaven is secure and every turn in the road, however painful, will lead to greater glory for God and his whole family.

Enjoy the Psalm today. It's a beautiful prayer of thanks. Recently I heard someone announcing a new discovery for healthy living - *Count your blessings!* *But we knew that.*

A Prayer – with Psalm 138 in mind.

*In the midst of everyday life with its constant change
we pause to remember you, Lord.
We bow our heads in praise because you have blessed us,
with answers to our prayers and the gift of new strength each day.
You are great beyond our imagining,
Yet you know and care for the lowly and needy.
Lord, I am your work in progress; you are constantly re-shaping me.
Complete your work in me – and in your Church.
From glory to glory!*

