

Sunday Thought

13th June 2021 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings

1 Samuel 15:34 – 16:13

Psalm 20

2 Corinthians 5: 6 - 10

Mark 4: 26 - 34

Prayer Twitters



Through the days of the pandemic many people in our cities have commented on the absence of traffic noise allowing them to hear the dawn chorus and individual birdsongs. However, it occurred to me that there has been an even greater twittering on social media. Didn't we once call it gossip?

Listening to some news bulletins has made me wonder who may be next for criticism and condemnation. Moral and social conduct in personal and political life has been brought under intense scrutiny. The authority of national leaders has been devalued. Questions are asked about everything from who was responsible for additional covid19 deaths in care homes to who paid for wallpaper in the Prime Minister's flat! Life experiences have been laid bare from politicians and sports personalities to media correspondents and even members of the royal family. A multitude of various other issues – unemployment, race, conservation, education – have been pecked apart by flocks of twitterers. And that's just in our country!

The questioning of authority arises at every national crisis. It was the same at the time of our Old Testament scripture today but then the prophet Samuel and king Saul were not troubled with twitter accounts. Last week's reading told of God's people demanding the institution of kingship. God, through the prophet Samuel selected Saul. He was from a tribe and family of no great significance who among other things ran a donkey business. Described as tall and handsome he is God's man for that hour who will become warrior king, suppressing the nation's enemies. However, years pass and the situation alters. Saul's popularity wanes. It is time for further change. Samuel is commanded to discern God's choice for his successor. The actual choosing is a loved and entertaining story in which the prophet works slowly through the sons of Jesse to reach the eighth and youngest – David who is also *'handsome and healthy and with sparkling eyes!'* There was still a way to go before the young shepherd would become Israel's greatest king – years of intrigue, romance, jealous rivalries and power struggles – no doubt providing endless 'tweets'. It all raises the question of what we look for and expect in national leaders and people in authority.

Today's scriptures suggest some thoughts about that. God's choice of leaders suggests he uses those who begin at ground level – a young shepherd and a donkey minder who have the needs of their people at heart. Often, God does not start with the great, but with the least – with women and men whom he can make great for his purposes. After all, he became one of us in the child of a village carpenter working in despised Nazareth. The Lord says, *'people look at the outward appearance – wealth, strength, status and qualification - but I look at the heart.* In our Gospel reading Jesus tells the parable of the mustard seed, explaining how God does not transplant a well-established shrub – he pops a seed into the soil. That leads to another important point about our choice of and trust in those in those with authority and leadership. Even when we are in an *up-side-down* situation we have to trust in God and, like the sower, not stay poking around to see how the seed is getting on but leaves it to God and the soil.

All this is a reminder of our key part in choice and support of our national leaders. Paul, writing to Timothy [1.2.2] says, *'I urge you to pray for all people, for kings and all in authority .. so we may live a quiet and peaceful life with all reverence to God.'* This is the 'twitter' which matters most - a persistent sparrow-like chatter of prayer from the church, speaking with our Lord on behalf of national leaders and about all people everywhere. This is the role of God's Kingdom people living at the heart of every community across the world – including our community here!

A Prayer [with 2 Corinthians 5: 6 – 10 in mind]



Lord, our God, it is so easy to 'twitter' about other people's failures.
Remind us how we shall all stand together before Jesus in the judgement.
Give us your grace to understand and forgive as you do,
and just as we ourselves wish to be understood and forgiven.
Our one desire is to please you.
Give us courage to trust you,
even when it is hard to see your unfolding purposes.

