



Br Adrian for Trinity 17 (2020)

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

I begin today with the song of the vineyard in Isaiah, what care the Lord showed to his vineyard, what love he had for the vines, what love he has for us.

Very little gives me more pleasure than watching Stuart pruning away at one of his plants in his nursery, noticing the little details, the pleasure, peace and prayer that he is in at such times is beautiful to feel and behold. Such care, such love and so it is with God and his vineyard, for God with us.

Indeed God with us, Immanuel, the coming down of the word made flesh, our saviour in whose suffering, in whose resurrection, in whose path our salvation lies. From the Fall to the promise to Abraham and fulfilment in Jacob, from subjugation under the Egyptians to the Exodus, From the Golden calf to the Coming to the promised land, from the rise of David to the depravity of exile, from that exile to triumphal return, from peace and stability to subjugation under the Romans, from political wrangling to death, to resurrection, the story and path of salvation has never been easy, it has been full of ripping apart and renewal, indeed from the first Isaiah to the third Isaiah we move from the tearing down of the vineyard to the return with the trees in the fields clapping their hands and a return of joy and through all that milieu of stability, rapid change, death and renewal what remains constant is God and his love for us, he will punish us and take away all that is dear to us but he will always restore the good fortunes of Jacob for his love endures for ever and his promises remain from age to age. It is in the struggle, whether considered on the global macro level or in the personal spiritual combat that St Paul speaks of in today's epistle to the Philippians. Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

The sorrow, the pain, the loss, the indifference all this must be endured and more besides with patient prayer and eager longing for Christ before the resurrection and rebirth and in doing so may we see such suffering ever more sweetly for our Lord is in it too and he eagerly awaits our homecoming.

In a way we ought to rejoice when the rock of Christ, our cornerstone, smashes our ego and our pride for we listen and repent, preferable though it is for us to repent willingly, we need to praise him when our worldly privileges and belongings are removed from us for we more readily turn to him for succour in prayer. It is in God our refuge lies and not in any worldly things it was in God that even at the point of despair Jesus cried out My God, My God why have you forsaken me and in so doing although almost despairing but for a moment also recognised God, his Father in whom hope was held and so the apostle reminds us of the striving for that goal which is Christ and eternal life in him.

Now rather than me waffling on incessantly as normal, trying to explain those things which at this moment I have insufficient skill or time to put into words I thought today I would instead close by reading to you a song from Malcolm Guite on Redemption for I feel the current running through the words says a lot more of what I am trying to communicate.

Sing a song of sowing
Of carrying the seed
A song of hopeful planting
To meet a future need
Sing a song of letting go
Of falling to the ground
Of burying that feels like loss
Still waiting to be found

There are no songs of famine
For hunger has no voice
The poor must scavenge what they can
The rich are spoiled for choice
The stones of fear and anger
Will strike you from behind
For hunger hates the stranger
And cleaves to his own kind

Sing a song of exile
Of loneliness and loss
A song of broken bridges
That nobody can cross

A song of desperation
For words you understand
A song of fearful labour
On someone else's land

Sing a song of marriage
The grace of bride and groom
The fruitful vine around the door
And joy within the room
A song of love and longing
For the children yet to be
A quiver-full of future hopes
Aimed at eternity

Sing a song of mourning
The shadows and the tombs
The bitterness of broken hearts
And disappointed wombs
Sing a song of empty words
And unexpressed despair
Of reaching out at midnight
For the one who isn't there

Sing a song of waiting
Of weeping on the earth
A song of expectation
And longing for new birth
Sing a song of patience
Of watching through the night
Sing the hours before the dawn
And sing the coming light

Sing a song of harvest
Of one who bind the sheaves
And one who gleans along the edge
The good another leaves
Sing a song of winnowing
And taking into store

Of Barley heaped like glowing gold
Upon the threshing floor

Sing out before the Lord of Life
Your songs of joy and pain
Sing of the years the locusts ate
That cannot come again
Sing to Him your hopes and fears
Your tales of right and wrong
And He will make your voice a part
Of His Redemption Song

Amen