

August September 2017

'ORDINARY OR EXTRAORDINARY?'

The Rector writes:



As a boy I loved adventure stories and it wasn't long before I discovered 'The Hobbit' and became enthralled by the adventures and misadventures of Bilbo Baggins. My favourite chapter is the one where Bilbo finds the Ring and encounters Gollum and they engage in a contest of 'Riddles in the Dark'. Gollum's most difficult riddle was this:

'This thing all things devours, birds, beasts, trees, flowers;
gnaws iron, bites steel, grinds hard stones to meal;
slays kings, ruins town, and beats high mountains down?'

The answer of course is time. Often referred to as the fourth dimension time is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary thus:

'the continual progress of existence and events that occur in apparently irreversible succession from the past through the present to the future'

The Sundays after Trinity are often referred to as 'Ordinary time'. This is not because they are dull or boring, but simply that they have no seasonal emphasis. Stretching through the months of summer and early autumn they provide us with an opportunity to follow a continuous or semi-continuous exploration of Scripture in our Sunday readings. At St Martin's this means that in our morning worship we will largely be following a systematic reading of St Matthew's gospel. In the evening we will be exploring the stories of God's people in the Old Testament, from Abraham through to Moses. Sharing the exciting stories of these great biblical heroes reminds us of their struggles, and puts our struggles today into perspective. They like us went through periods of austerity, conflict and despair; as well as moments of triumph and great joy.

The fact is that time is not ordinary – it is an extraordinary gift from God. Each of us receives this gift, yet none of us knows in exactly what quantity. What matters is not so much how much time we have, but how we use it. The writer of Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a time for 'every matter under heaven' (Ecc 3:1), then after the well known list (vv 2-8) reminds us that:

'God has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by.'
(Ecc 3:11-14).

So as we move into the Summer holiday season may we find time to relax and unwind as we take a break from routine, perhaps catching up with old friends or exploring new places or evoking old memories. Then when we return refreshed and ready to meet the issues and challenges of our future time, may we be inspired to make ever better use our time in the service of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And as we look to the future may we ever be mindful of the gift of time, and give thanks to God for his extraordinary gift.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John, your Rector.