

Aldbrough Festival (Trinity 2 Yr A proper 7).

Sometimes it's difficult to hear things which we don't like. The prophet Jeremiah knew that what he had to say was unpopular, but he had to say it for not to would have eaten away at him. The people Jeremiah addressed certainly didn't want to hear what he had to say for it meant that they would have to do things differently and change their ways. But the reading from Jeremiah displays to us the personal cost of doing the right thing saying the right words when no one wants to hear them. Jeremiah is shunned and people plot against him to silence him. Jeremiah paints a very troubled and lonely figure as God calls him to be his prophet. Being God's prophet has a very personal cost for Jeremiah.

In our Gospel Jesus also tells the disciples, the early church and indeed us that being his disciple, doing the right thing and speaking truth to power will be very often a lonely and costly furrow to plough. You might lose family and friends and even face death, such is the real and personal cost of following Jesus.

But in both readings it becomes clear that just because you are a person of faith you will not some how be immune from the judgement of a world that may not want to hear what you say and wants, in fact, to silence you in any way it can. But at the end of both the readings Jeremiah and Jesus give a message of hope. Jeremiah, so broken and bowed down, says 'Sing to the Lord, Praise the Lord. For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hands of evildoers'. Jesus says to the disciples 'fear not for you have found life and you are loved and valued by God and have true life'.

All people of faith have to live and cope in the time and space they have been placed in. We are no different and have to cope with all that life has to throw

at us. Because we have faith, we are not some how immune or above the world in which we exist. We are subject to all that life throws at us including death. But it's how we deal with all this that marks us out as people of faith Do we react with anger and resentment or with love and reconciliation? Do we pull a face or sulk in the corner, or do we like Jeremiah, the disciples and countless Christians remain faithful both to our call and those we have been called to speak to and serve?

All people of faith have had things denied them during the Covid 19 crisis. We as Christians have been denied our fellowship, our breaking of bread and sharing the cup together even the great joy of singing together. How have we coped with this? Well, I think rather well. We could have been outraged and say how dare we be told what to do and gone our own way. But that wouldn't have been right nor a good example of standing with people in all that life has to throw at them as Jesus himself did. Whilst we have been denied our sacred spaces and our fellowship we have still manged, as a dispersed Christian community, to worship and support one another. That is the mark of a vibrant and responsive faith to face all that is thrown at us and not to put our hands up and just surrender or go away in a corner and speak to just ourselves and do our own thing. Or are we be able to continue to think of different ways in which our communities of faith can be sustained and even grow and above all can connect with people.

When we went into lockdown, I missed many things, a pint in the one eyed rat in Ripon with friends (in the interest of balance there are many other good hostelries in Ripon), going where I wanted when I wanted and by seeing whoever I choose. I missed the sacred spaces, the churches and the Cathedrals. I missed those things I'd done all my Christian life gathering and

breaking word and bread and singing together. One of the things I have missed the most in Ripon Cathedral is the music. The sheer joy of hearing beautiful music echoing around ancient walls and that sense of God and timelessness such music can engender. I missed that the most and I know so many have. Listening to a recording is and never will be the same. It can never replace the exuberance of making music to praise God. I've really missed singing and sometimes when I've been in the Cathedral alone I've just felt the need to sing and fill the place with my feeble attempt at music.

Today of course, would have been our festival service for the Aldborough Festival. I was looking forward to the service, a celebration in word and music of praise to God to fill St. Andrew's church in Aldborough. But how things have changed. Karen has put together a service in response to not being able to gather, a way to keep us connected, to be part of a living faith where music is at its beating heart. So many, I know, have been disappointed because the long standing and renown Aldborough Festival had to be cancelled this year. It must have been a difficult thing to have to do – but it was the right thing to do to for our own wellbeing, and that of others and our community. But I am sure the Festival will be back. I look forward to that and I look forward to the time when Ripon cathedral will once again be filled with music.

Music is a great gift from God, and we need to cherish those who have been gifted with music. I know that many musicians live financially precarious lives and that the lockdown and cancellation of so much has been extremely difficult for them. So please don't forget those who make the music we love and support them if you can.

In life as people of faith we have to make difficult decisions, but the mark of our faith is doing the right thing and standing with people, not against them. It's

a costly calling, but then Jesus told us it would be. But our joy and our reward is giving hope to a world where hope can be in short supply. In the end like Jeremiah we will 'Sing to the Lord', for our faith can never be silenced and our hearts long to sing once again. May we all do so soon.

Amen.