



The Benefice of Upper Wensleydale

'Church in the Home'



Edition 29

Sunday Oct 4th – Saturday Oct 10th



From the Vicarage 'Moving on'

'Change is here to stay' I remember hearing in my youth, and so much does seem to be changing around us as we seem to be regularly re-calibrating our lives to adjust to the changing circumstances that the virus brings to us. Our readings today remind us of what we can do when we face challenge.

'Church in the Home', which has been circulated to over 180 addresses every week for the last 7 months is now ceasing. With our churches having been open for regular Sunday worship every week since August the 2nd, we feel it has served its purpose and that the time has now arrived for us to place our energy and resources in a new direction. I know from the feedback we have received that many of you have found this to be a most helpful way of remaining in touch as church over the last 29 weeks, but we hope and pray that you may now feel confident in returning to the buildings to join physically with the church once more.

Our four church buildings continue to observe a very rigorous hygiene regime following guidance from the Church of England. This has allowed us official accreditation from the government for creating what we believe is a safe environment for everyone who visits us. Numbers attending services have been good and show a steady increase as more of the community in the upper dale feel comfortable with the idea of attending once again. I know that some of you are still having to be very careful about public interaction and we continue to pray for you, but joining together for fellowship and worship helps us all in our walk of faith, so I encourage you, as and when you can, to get back into the habit of being church together and to join with your friends once again as we learn more about the wonder and joy that there is in **living our lives with God**.

Keep your eye on the website and our Facebook page for information of what is happening.

*May you know the love, joy and peace of the Lord in your hearts
and in your homes, now and always.*

Bible Readings for Sunday October 4th

Psalm 11, 2 Chronicles 20:1-18, Matthew 7:24-29

Put the address below in your internet browser, type in the reading you want and then listen to David Suchet read it to you.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/audio/suchet/nivuk/Gen.1>

Psalm 11

For the director of music. Of David.

¹ In the LORD I take refuge.
How then can you say to me:
'Flee like a bird to your mountain.
² For look, the wicked bend their bows;
they set their arrows against the strings
to shoot from the shadows
at the upright in heart.
³ When the foundations are being destroyed,
what can the righteous do?'
⁴ The LORD is in his holy temple;
the LORD is on his heavenly throne.
He observes everyone on earth;
his eyes examine them.
⁵ The LORD examines the righteous,
but the wicked, those who love violence,
he hates with a passion.
⁶ On the wicked he will rain
fiery coals and burning sulphur;
a scorching wind will be their lot.
⁷ For the LORD is righteous,
he loves justice;
the upright will see his face.

2 Chronicles, 20

After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat.

² Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). ³ Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the LORD, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. ⁴ The people of Judah came together to seek help from the LORD; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.

⁵ Then Jehoshaphat stood up in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple of the LORD in the front of the new courtyard ⁶ and said:

"LORD, the God of our ancestors, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you. ⁷ Our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ They have lived in it and have built in it a sanctuary for your Name, saying, ⁹ 'If calamity comes upon us, whether the sword of judgment, or plague or famine, we will stand in your presence before this temple that bears your Name and will cry out to you in our distress, and you will hear us and save us.'

¹⁰ “But now here are men from Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, whose territory you would not allow Israel to invade when they came from Egypt; so they turned away from them and did not destroy them. ¹¹ See how they are repaying us by coming to drive us out of the possession you gave us as an inheritance. ¹² Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

¹³ All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.

¹⁴ Then the Spirit of the LORD came on Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly.

¹⁵ He said: “Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: ‘Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. ¹⁶ Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. ¹⁷ You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”

¹⁸ Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.

Matthew 7

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” ²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

Reflection

REFLECTION

When the ‘Battle’ chooses us

Once more, the government has found it necessary to tighten the restrictions on freedom of movement and social gatherings in an attempt to arrest the progress of the virus.

Once more we have seen expressions of confusion and concern over the impact that these measures will have upon individual lives, businesses, communities & personal wellbeing.

Recent comments from interviews with the BBC from members of the public reveal a sense of frustration and loss at the lack of certainty there is to life as the things that used to be familiar and relied upon are gradually removed from our general experience.

What then, are we to do? As a church and as disciples of Jesus Christ, what should we be thinking and how should we be responding as these days of uncertainty continue? We didn't choose this, so what should we do when the 'battle' chooses us?

In our psalm, King David addresses the voices of those who are advising him to run away from a problem that is around him and attacking him unseen from hidden places. The enemy they face is shaking the very foundations of society and everything that they have come to rely upon. The situation sounds familiar. *His* response? Look to the Lord and take refuge in the one that is *unshakeable*. When we feel fearful, anxious or apprehensive, don't dwell on these emotions but look to something bigger and greater for security. Covid 19 did not create fear and anxiety; these things have always been with us. Covid 19 has however, *revealed* fear and anxiety. So; what should we do with them? David comes back to a reality of his experience that no matter what is changing and taking place around him, the Lord does not change. The Lord remains the same. He is here, He is about his business, look to Him.

The account of King Jehoshaphat has always reminded me of the time when King George the 6th called for a national day of prayer in May, 1940. Faced with disaster and the very real threat of invasion from an overwhelming enemy, millions turned out to wait in long queues to enter church buildings to pray for God's help. Jehoshaphat is surrounded by an enormous army. Like David, the battle has chosen him. Note that his first response is to seek God's help and to remind himself and his people of all that God *is* and all that God has *done* in the past. He speaks words of faith derived from a personal experience and a personal relationship with God. It's so important that we have our own memories and encounters of a faithful God to recall in times of personal need. If you're a parent or grandparent the greatest gift you can pass on to the future is an introduction to a loving, faithful God. Look how everyone is involved – men, women and children, and out of their worship comes a word from the Lord himself. 'Do not be afraid the battle is not yours, but God's'

Looking out at the 'vast army' ^{v2}, must have caused many to doubt their position and to begin to question what the future may hold. I see this as a reminder, that we must not let any enemy undermine our resolve or our 'armour'. For disciples of Jesus our armoury is our knowledge of the reality of who God is and our **worship**. Worship and prayer always changes things. Worship silences the enemy – ^{psalm 8:2} We might not be able to sing collectively at the moment but that should not silence our worship and sung praise when we are at home. I encourage you to keep singing! Sing your favourite hymns, sing your favourite worship songs. Sing the truth of the nature of God. Let your ears hear your mouth proclaim it. Just as the musicians worshipped as they faced the problem that faced them, face any battle you might have with declaring the truth about God over that situation.

As Jesus reminds us, foundations are important. When we build our lives on something dependable, unshakeable and immovable, then no matter what the battle is that we might have to face; physical, financial, sickness, relational etc, we need never face it alone. *'When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?'* ... they can remember the truth of who God is. As we continue to face days of uncertainty where we may be feeling lonely or apprehensive, I encourage you to continue to look to the Lord for your strength. Declare the truth of his character. remember with thanksgiving, the occasions of answered prayer in your lives and worship Him

Rev. Dave.

*Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy.
Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick,
and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.*