



Sunday, 25 February 2018 – Lent 2

**Readings: Genesis 17:1-17, Romans 4:13-end and St Mark 8.31-end
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

In our Lent devotional booklets and Lent Study Group we are taking a journey of discipleship over the course of six weeks exploring what it means to be witnesses of Jesus' ministry. At the beginning of the service I said that to be reliable witnesses of Jesus' ministry needs: calling, commitment; certainty and communication. In my sermon today, we'll explore that from the perspective of the Holy Scriptures through which God addresses us directly and this Sunday's designated prayers that we address to God directly. So, let's begin our discipleship journey of discovery exploring today's Old Testament lesson from Genesis. In it Abram and Sarai receive new names from God to denote the covenant that he has made with them.

Those of you who are parents will know the power that you bestow on your children when you name them. Thereafter, they will identify with that name responding to it when called. At baptism that name takes on a new direction when offered to God for his blessing. He bestows his calling on each person individually by the power of the Holy Spirit. The outward name is given an inner spiritual meaning. It is through our journey of discipleship that we discover the breadth and depth of that spiritual calling.

Let's now consider today's Collect, the prayer that gathers our intentions for the service. In it, as disciples, we state that we are enlightened for we understand the error of our ways in the light of God's truth. The prayer reminds us of our membership of Christ's Church received at baptism, however, it is at our Confirmation that we commit fully to the Christian faith rejecting all that is contrary to it. We state our decision to follow God the Father our Creator, God the Son our Redeemer and God the Holy Spirit, the Sustainer of our Christian commitment.

Moving forward to the New Testament, although we didn't read today's Epistle St Paul reminds the Romans and us all, that the fuel for our journey is faith through Jesus Christ. Travelling on to the Gospel Jesus lays it on the line that to follow him is to put our shoulder to the cross with him. As I said in my sermon a couple weeks back, the road to glory is through the cross. Commitment needs selfless action as well as statements of faith.

Now, on the horizon, the end of our discipleship journey approaches: let's view it through today's Post-Communion Prayer, which reminds us that we have no fuel for the journey of our own making. Our power comes solely from God both for our physical bodies, which we know by name and for our inner being, which God knows by name. Crucially, to journey as Christ's disciple is not being sent out into the unknown. We have certainty that he walks each step of the way beside us guiding through all adversity because it's his mission and ministry, that he calls us to share in the building of his kingdom.

Christ drew on the scriptures throughout his ministry to communicate their message. In particular, he associated his calling with the servant writings of Isaiah, as well as gaining inspiration when faced with challenge. With Isaiah in mind, to complete the journey, I share with you a poignant memory.

My ordination training was undertaken by distance learning together with frequent long weekends away at theological college in Salisbury. On the last training weekend in Salisbury with my ordination only a couple of months off, I took time to reflect on the certainty and strength of my calling. I visited the Cathedral and, as I walked around the baptismal font, I noted these words, taken from Isaiah, forming a continuous loop:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by name you are mine.
When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you.
Fear not, for I have redeemed you.
I have called you by name you are mine.” *(Isaiah 43:1-2)*

These promises of God made a deep impression on me providing confirmation that what I was undertaking was his will: I felt equipped for all that was to come. Little did I know then how quickly I would be called to draw on that moment. The following night back in Guernsey, I recited those self-same words to my mother, as she lay dying in hospital.

I can think of no greater source of certainty and no greater hope than that which these promises provide. As committed disciples of Christ, I invite you join me in embedding them in our hearts and minds both as a source of strength and witness, in our living and in our dying, so that we can communicate them confidently to others:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed **you**.
I have called **you** by name **you** are mine.”

Amen