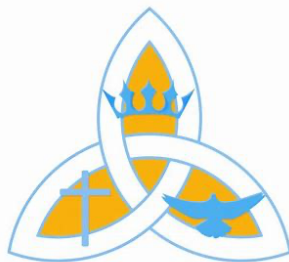


Trinity Sunday
Sunday, 30th May 2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

‘Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’
(Isaiah 6: 8)

Over the past couple of weeks, Carol Coleman has been hard at work collating various people’s favourite psalms, for a recording she is making for Café Church online. If she asked you, I wonder which psalm you would choose. There are many psalms to which I turn at particular times of puzzlement, anxiety, thanksgiving and joy; and many which clothe me as I go about my sacramental and pastoral ministry. There are a couple which are etched onto my heart, and come to the fore instinctively. And just one which I feel is writ through my soul like letters through Brighton rock. You will have to watch the Café Church video to see if my favourite made Carol’s edit!

Had Carol been questioning me as to my ‘go-to’ text from the prophet Isaiah, (a tough call amidst so many searching and holy poetic visions), I know the words of today’s reading for Trinity Sunday are tied like a gossamer thread around my heart.



‘Triune Heart of the Universe’ – Stushie Art

'Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, 'Here am I; send me!' Oftentimes, people share with me how, in the midst of a Sunday service, a particular text or sermon speaks to them, as if it has been crafted for their ears only. Isaiah 6: 1-8 was one such text for me.

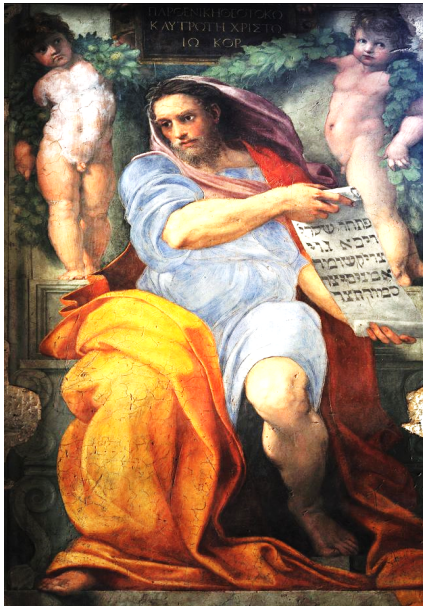
The experience occurred early one Sunday morning in the shadows of St Anne's Chapel in Romsey Abbey, as I took the Office of Morning Prayer for a handful of steadfast parishioners. I had been questioning whether I felt called to Priesthood from my ordained role as Deacon. A great part of me felt unworthy of priesthood; I also felt that, as Deacon, being a servant to God's people was all I wanted to be. I worried I would lose pastoral connection by taking on the sacramental responsibility of priestly ministry. My mind was in turmoil. I felt under considerable pressure to make a decision – having uprooted my family, spent three years at Theological College, and a year in Curacy. It seemed everyone expected me to become a priest except me! As I pondered my soul, asking God for a sign, I felt alone; my prayers ignored. And then, unexpectedly, the answer came as I read out the words of Isaiah's own vocational call to become God's messenger: *'Here am I; send me!'*

As I heard myself reading aloud, I had a simultaneous vision of the Holy Trinity flowing all around me - floating and ethereal, yet equally solid and tangible, in a burst of vibrant colour swathed with silver, gold and a vivid blue. And through all that, came the absolute conviction that my path was to priesthood: to be part of the blessing of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in and through the slow light of the Eucharist. Humbly, the closest I have ever come to being able to describe the colours of my vision, is in the glass artwork The Downs Benefice presented me with on becoming your Rector!



'Isaiah's Lips Anointed with Fire' by Benjamin West

Chapter 6 of Isaiah's prophesy gives us a lofty view of God's greatness, mystery and power. We join Isaiah at a time in history around 740BC on the death of King Uzziah, and catch a snapshot of a world which was filled with moral and spiritual turpitude. Uzziah had been a successful king, both in war and in peace. Reigning for 52 years, his achievements brought him worldly fame and fortune, yet it was these very attributes which brought about his spiritual downfall. Pride and arrogance, and an overwhelming sense of his own self-importance caused Uzziah to overlook how much God had given him. Uzziah lost sight of God's majesty; he forgot to be thankful for the blessings of his life – and in his complacency, this lack of thanksgiving caused him to overlook and undervalue the equally important gifts which God had given to others.



The Prophet Isaiah by Raphael

As a moral tableau on this Trinity Sunday, Isaiah 6 brings us a timely understanding of our need to bow down in thankfulness before God, appreciating both the very blessing of our being alive, and of the profound importance of receiving God's forgiveness. His story helps us to pare back the layers of sinfulness, which we allow to build up; shielding ourselves against God's majesty - layers of self-aggrandisement in the case of King Uzziah.

We experience Isaiah's passionate humility in the face of his vision, as he recognises himself to be a sinful man. And, through the sensuous action of the Seraph touching Isaiah's sinful lips with purifying coal, we are drawn into his unfolding realisation that, despite his own sense of unworthiness, God wanted to use Isaiah to help people who had turned away from God to rediscover the blessing of His forgiving heart: *'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.'*

Through Isaiah, we learn to stand in the presence of God, as Father Son and Holy Spirit. We are given the vision of God as transcendent and all powerful: we see how His presence fills the whole earth and is capable of intervening in the world through flawed human vessels such as you and me.



'Detail from the Sistine Chapel' by Michelangelo

Isaiah's personal experience of receiving God's forgiveness helped me to overcome my own very real sense of unworthiness and resistance to God's call on my life; to identify, and then to strip away, the layers of insecurity, self-loathing and guilt I felt as I too stood in God's presence and finally understood what it meant to trust Him with my life.

Does Isaiah's story help you to grow as a Christian? This Trinity Sunday we are wise to stand in holy obedience before the throne of God, giving thanks to Father Son and Holy Spirit for every aspect of our lives. In this holy space, and bathed in the forgiving love of the Trinity, I pray that, as individuals and as a diocese, we will listen intently to the truth God is speaking to us, and have the courage and humility to live it out.

Adapted from the prayer of St Patrick's Breastplate:

We bind unto ourselves today
The power of God to hold and lead,
His eye to watch, His might to stay,
His ear to hearken to our need.
The wisdom of our God to teach,
His hand to guide, His shield to ward,
The word of God to give us speech,
His heavenly host to be our guard.
We bind unto ourselves today
The strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same,
The Three in One and One in Three.

Jax

Revd Jax Machin, Rector, The Downs Benefice

Schedule of Services

All services are at 10am.

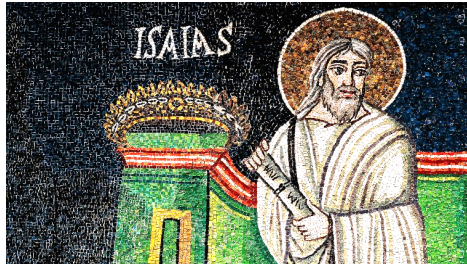
*Please contact the Benefice Office on 01962 880 845 or
office@downsbenefice.org.uk to book a place at any of these services.*

Please remember to wear masks.

Date	Chilbolton	Crawley	Littleton	Sparsholt	Wherwell
30 May				Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer
6 June	Morning Prayer	Morning Prayer			
13 June				Holy Communion	Morning Prayer
20 June	Holy Communion		Morning Prayer		
23 June			Midweek Holy Communion		
27 June		Holy Communion			

Collect Prayer for Trinity Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God,
you have given us your servants grace, by the confession of a true faith,
to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity
and in the power of the divine majesty to worship the Unity:
keep us steadfast in this faith,
that we may evermore be defended from all adversities;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.



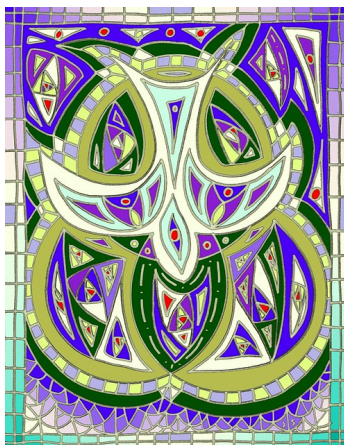
Isaiah 6: 1-8 - A Vision of God in the Temple

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.’

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: ‘Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!’

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: ‘Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, ‘Here am I; send me!’



John 3: 1-17 - Nicodemus Visits Jesus

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no-one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.'

Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no-one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.