

ST PETER'S PARISH CHURCH, RUSHDEN

The Rock

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#17

BELONG - BELIEVE - GROW - REACH OUT

Thursday, 13th August is a red letter day for our family. In the Church's calendar it commemorates three Christian people: Jeremy Taylor, Teacher of the Faith (1667); Florence Nightingale, nurse and social reformer (1910); and Octavia Hill, social reformer (1912) The dates in brackets of course, mark the day in which these three Christians ended their journey here on earth, and to borrow language from the Salvation Army, were 'promoted to glory'.

For our family, it marks the day when our grandsons, Sam and Luke, together with thousands of other young people, will receive their 'A' level results. Their grades will determine whether they are able to take up places at university, or to consider other options. It is also the day when Agnes is scheduled to have a knee replacement operation.

One of our Bible Readings for Sunday, 19th July, records the occasion when Jacob left home for the first time. Genesis 28. 10 – 19, tells us that Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran, the home of his ancestors and relatives. When I left home for the first time, it was to train to be a teacher, and I had the good fortune to own an old van, that my father had worked on, and he came with me as far as the College gates, and hitched a lift home. Not so for Jacob. Although his ostensible reason for his journey was to find a suitable wife, he was also under the cloud that he had himself created when he cheated his brother Esau out of the family blessing and birth right. It was a long, and potentially hazardous journey, with no road signs, and no Welcome Inn or Travel Lodge to stay. As the sun went down, Jacob must have been aware of the dangers of such a desolate and deserted place.

It was at such a remote location, that Jacob once more received a revelation from God in the form of a dream. Jacob's encounter that day, with the living God serves to remind us of the immensity of God's generous grace and mercy. God had made it plain to Isaac and Rebekah, that Jacob, though the younger twin, was to be the heir of his promise, but as so often happens in families, Esau, the first born was his father's favourite, and Jacob, his mother's favourite. Jacob was a quirky mixture: on the one hand, feeling that he was a man of destiny, but at the same time, very much a 'wheeler - dealer' prepared to go to any lengths to acquire, not only the birth-right and privilege, but also the material benefits, to Esau's disadvantage! Future events show that Jacob never needed the family fortune, because his business acumen resulted in making his own!

As I look back on life there are scores of times in which I wish that I could do a re-take, and re-write the script, undoing the results of my own foolishness and folly. The wonderful thing is, that God does not give up on us, despite our waywardness and self- seeking, and renews his promises to us.

If we continue reading the story of Jacob, we will see that his patience was tried on many future occasions, but God's promises and blessing remained with him throughout. God does not need our cleverness, but he seeks our availability. God's promises in this wonderful reading remind us that God is faithful and true from one generation to another, and that God blesses us not because of who or what we are, but according to the abundance of his mercy. No wonder Jacob called the place, 'The house of God and the gate of heaven' and marked it out as a constant reminder of God's great mercy.

There is a wonderful, 18th century hymn, that celebrates Jacob's encounter with the living God at Bethel. It reminds us that God's love meets us at every point and turn in our lives, and whatever may change, God's mercy endures for ever.

'And when we arrive at the haven of rest
We shall hear the glad words, 'Come up hither, ye blest,
'here are regions of light, here are mansions of bliss'
O who would not climb such a ladder as this?'

**Alleluya to Jesus who died on the tree,
And has raised up a ladder of mercy for me.**

- Rev. John Seaman

Sunday Services & Private Prayer

We are aiming to start our Sunday worship services again in August and more detailed information will follow soon. In the meantime, the church is open for private prayer Thursday 23rd July and Sunday 26th July. Please ring Liz Bateman to reserve your place.

Prayer for the Week

Creator God, you made us all in your image: may we discern you in all that we see, and serve you in all that we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Memory Verse

'Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love'.

- Joel 2:13

Joan's Joke!

What do you get if you cross an elephant with a fish? ... *Swimming Trunks!*

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