

**Sermon Lent 2 Year A 2023**  
**Genesis 12: 1 – 4, 2 Timothy 1: 8 – 10, Matthew 17: 1 – 9.**

**Good saying isn't always easy doing.**

*“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.”*

*Winston S. Churchill – or was it?*

Most of us know that change is part of life and to live life fully involves many changes. The plea for change is at the heart of many faiths especially ours. In the beginning of the Bible there is nothing and many changes are wrought after each God sees that it is good – however we know that not all change is good – so does God that why he reveals himself as the Christ.

Motive and purpose, the means and unforeseen consequences all shape whether change is good or not and of course we must always ask - good for whom. Into the distortion of all that was good Christ, who already was, is born lives dies and is risen to restore all that is good and give us hope in the journey to achieve it.

In the Old Testament lesson of today we are reminded how our forefather Abraham changes much even his name: from the sin of Abram to the righteousness of Abraham. He leaves his country with its sinful culture of idolatry, his family with wayward traits, his father's house and possessions – the best lands going to Lot his kinsman. All this he left for the unknown, relying on God's promise: 'I will bless you and make you so famous it will be used as a blessing'.

Abraham exemplars leaving behind present gain for the future. We might think of this as the summary of our fait; to leave the present of sin/separation to move towards holiness according to God's leading. It is of course tempered by Jesus's teaching of the present presence of God's kingdom and blessedness the moment we follow. Nevertheless Abraham in gaining prosperity of heaven and earth remains the great ancestor and model faithful change.

Why and how do we to leave the present for the unseen future? Past present and future are mingled in our story of of salvation - God has saved us but repentance and resurrection are in the present and future. Our Gospel shows how God inhabits the present to show past and future and

how His son is always calling us on and on. In the vision of the transfiguration Moses and Elijah are reminders of past but they too are different and called on. They are part of the present and future – for they are next to Christ.

Who would have thought that Winston Churchill was familiar with Cardinal Newman? He was a 19<sup>th</sup> Century Anglican convert to Roman Catholicism and now a Saint who changed much and whose *theology of development* echoed the theory of evolution of his day and actually said : *'Change is the logic of life. To live is to change and to be holy is to have changed often'*. We can't progress spiritually without effort to change. Species that don't change go extinct.

But not all change is good and not all non-change is either. If we think about it, the devilish faults and vices that so beset us are all to do with being stuck in the past or overly fixated *with* the present – not unlike Peter on the mountain. Hatred, anger, jealousy, lying, pride, lust, and much else thwart our reaching forward for holiness. Worst of all is discouragement and hopelessness which is why our 2nd reading wants us not to lose hope on being holy. Keeping it alive relies on the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus has led the disciples up the mountain not to get stuck but to move on. Yet to do so with hope requires some rest in presence and some reflection on past too – all this is present on the mountain, all this is part of a holy lent.

Christian life does not stop at the mountain of prayer but proceeds to Calvary. Believers build not tents but match towards Calvary and deal with their fears failings and weaknesses on the way. In this pattern we submit our character this Lenten season to the Word of God through Jesus Christ. Please God there will be times in prayer like Christ of transfiguration of seeing into past and future in a new way – any present glimpse of glory is an invitation to grow to change and not stay where we are. What a wonderful message for lent not least for those of us who have journeyed many years like Abraham himself. But in all our journeying and change – like Cardinal John Newman we need to hold fast to the truth that it's us that need to change – not God and his ways.

*The Revd Fr. David Wylie RN*

*March 5<sup>th</sup> 2023*