

RECTOR'S PINT

I haven't written one of these for some time! I am very grateful to Toby Garfitt and Tony Jefferis who have offered their thoughts and insights in my absence.

I don't want to go into the details or circumstances that led me to taking a rather unexpected sabbatical. However, I have been really touched by the many messages of greetings and support I have received. It has also been surprising how many people have told me that they have also had to wrestle with mental health issues, it is far more common than we imagine and I think that it would be a good and healthy thing, not least in the Church, if we could be more open and honest about the struggles we face.

I wish I could say that my spiritual life of prayer had taken a leap forward with the time and opportunity to 'go deep'. The truth is it has been sporadic and at times very hard to pray, but I have tried. During our zoom services of 2020 and 2021 we started to engage with the poems of the priest and poet Malcolm Guite. His writings have been very helpful to me, and I particularly recommend his book, *David's Crown*. This is not a re-writing of the Psalms, rather, he has taken each Psalm and has written a response, each one of five verses with three lines. It is a beautiful and very thoughtful companion to the Psalms. I recently read Psalm 107, and I wish I had come across it earlier as it really spoke to me, it might also speak to one or two of you. It has a personal application and perhaps a bit of a wider reach, reflecting in part the times we have all been through.

Psalm 107: Confitemini Domion (Give thanks to the Lord)

My judge is still my saviour and my friend.

Time after time he finds and rescues me,

Makes a beginning where I have made an end.

I was astray and yet he came to save me

And filled my hungry soul with nourishment.

I sat in darkness, bound in misery,

Crushed by depression and discouragement,

He brought me out of darkness, broke the chain,

The complex links of my imprisonment.

When I was sick and wearied and in pain,

Afraid of pestilence in these dark days,

He sent his word and raised me up again.

So I will sing this psalm that sings his praise,

Telling of all the wonders he has done,

Whose loving kindness keeps me all my days.

(Malcolm Guite, *David's Crown*, Sounding the Psalms Canterbury Press 2021)

This is a wonderful book and each one of his reflections is an absolute gem.

I am now greatly looking forward to our upcoming services, and our Lent lunches in March. These have always been very popular and are a valuable experience in which we can all share.

It is good to get back to writing Rector's Pint, but I know that you have really benefited from Toby and Tony's offerings, and perhaps it is also something I can share with others now and again.

Every blessing

Simon