

Reflections for 6th December 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

Comfort and Strength

You have probably heard of the Bayeux Tapestry, with its famous depiction of the Battle of Hastings. You may not have heard of Bishop Odo, who was both a bishop, and a soldier, and was probably the person who commissioned the Bayeux Tapestry. So it is not surprising that he also appears in the tapestry, underneath a caption that may be translated as:

Bishop Odo *comforts* his troops

and he is depicted hitting his soldiers with a club to encourage them to fight! The caption could also be translated as:

Here Odo the Bishop *strengthens* the men.

Our Old Testament reading from Isaiah chapter 40 begins with these words:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

When we think of 'comfort', perhaps we think of a child's favourite blanket or cuddly toy, or what we call 'comfort food', or other things that suggest being soothed, feeling warm and comfortable, and being reassured.

But the strange example of Bishop Odo reminds us that this word also has the sense of giving strength, as in the word 'fortify', so God's words of comfort for his people are intended to strengthen and encourage us to change, and live a new life.

During Advent, our season of preparation, as we reflect on our faith and life, we may discover anew God's comforting presence with us, both to calm and assure us when we are troubled, and also to strengthen us to live out our faith as followers of Jesus.

Revd John Waller

God our Father, you spoke to the prophets of old
of a Saviour who would bring peace.

You helped them to spread the joyful message
of his coming kingdom.

Help us, as we prepare to celebrate his birth,
to share with those around us
the good news of your power and love.

We ask this through Jesus Christ,
the light who is coming into the world. Amen.

Bible readings: Isaiah 40. 1-11; 2 Peter 3. 8-15a; Mark 1. 1-8

Story: 'Ruth finds a new home' (based on the Old Testament book of Ruth)