

Psalm 25. 1-8

We've all had those ear-worms – that is to say, a musical phrase or catchy, yet irritating, advertising jingle that we simply cannot get out of our heads. The repetition simply drives us crazy, sometimes for hours. Likewise, there are some pop-songs that are equally memorable for having a chorus or repetitive line that we just can't shake off.

To this writer's knowledge, there has only been one Psalm made into a pop-song – "By the rivers of Babylon", a song made famous by Boney M, which uses verses from Psalms 19 and 137. Apart from being a very successful adaptation of Scripture, it had a chorus that burrowed into our consciousness! ("By the rivers of Babylon, where we sat down....." there, that should register for a few hours....!)

Quite a few hymns have their roots in the Psalms: most obviously, 'The Lord's my Shepherd' is an adaptation of Psalm 23, and 'Praise my soul, the King of heaven' draws on images from Psalms 47 & 67.

It's perhaps strange to think of the Psalms as the pop-songs or jingles of their day, but that is rather what they were, or at least they had the same effect. Their verses were recited, or sung, in the Temple and during other acts of worship, and we know Jesus and His Disciples sang hymns and psalms before they left for the Garden of Gethsemane.

Take any line of any Psalm and meditate upon it, and it can have a such a power that it can become deeply rooted in one's spirituality; or use it as one of those 'arrow-prayers' we often aim at God. Perhaps we could look for no better than verse 1 of Psalm 25: 'In you, Lord my God, I put my trust'. Later in the Psalm we find the assurance that God will remember us in His love and mercy.

O Sing unto the Lord

Many of the hymns we have looked at in this column have been translated by J.M. Neale, often with origins in the Eastern Church. *Stars of the morning, so gloriously bright* is another such hymn, translated from the Greek and attributed to Joseph the Hymnographer (c.812-886). Joseph was the most prolific hymn writer of the Byzantine tradition with more than two hundred hymns attributed to him in the present liturgical books of the Orthodox Church. This hymn deserves to be better known, being a spectacularly extravagant address to the angels and archangels, and the other orders in heaven, with a dramatic reference to the Archangels in verse four: 'Who like the Lord?' thunders Michael, the Chief / Raphael, 'the cure of God,' comforteth grief / And, as at Nazareth, prophet of peace / Gabriel, 'the light of God,' bringeth release. The *Trisagion* mentioned in the first verse refers to the ancient refrain: *Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy and Immortal, have mercy on us*. That is also the name given to the most popular tune by Henry Smart (1813-1879) who was for many years organist of St Pancras Parish Church in London.

Prayers to Remember

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

27th September
2020

The Sixteenth
Sunday after Trinity
26th Sunday
of the Year

Integrity



We have heard it said many times that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." How often do we deceive ourselves into thinking that if we tell ourselves often enough that we are going to do something, and yet the action never materialises, that at least the good intention was there? Jesus presents His hearers with the Parable of the two sons. The Father asks his sons to work in the Vineyard, an image not only of Israel but of the Kingdom, the sphere of God's activity. The first son refuses, but his initial "I will not" is, in the end, translated into action. The second son, however, agrees to work, even calling his Father "Lord," and yet he did nothing. How reminiscent is this of another teaching of Jesus about those who call Him "Lord, Lord", but do not do the Father's will, and so do not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Any act of self-reflection should ponder the gap that sometimes exists between our words and our actions. We can claim to know our faith inside out, recite the Creed and the liturgy by heart, call to mind word-for-word favourite and well-loved prayers, but those words must seep into the very core of our being and be translated into action for the good of the Vineyard where God has placed us.

