

All Saints' Church

Cottenham with Rampton



Pastoral Letter #32

21st October 2020

Dear Church Family,

On the 16th of October, it was the third anniversary of my licensing as Priest-in-Charge, now Rector, of Cottenham with Rampton. And yet, few of you will know that I only became your Rector because a previous post had not worked out as planned, despite believing (through prayer) that this first posting had been God's will.

The daily lectionary readings over the last few weeks have taken us through the back end of the book of Acts. Paul had been seized by the Jews for speaking out about Jesus and, for his own safety, Paul is transferred to Caesarea to stand trial before the Roman Governor, Felix. Felix keeps Paul in jail for two years, sending for him frequently and talking with him until Felix is then succeeded by Porcius Festus. A trial before Festus then ensues during which Paul declares his intent to appeal to Caesar in Rome, his right as a Roman citizen. He eventually sets sail, as a prisoner, for Rome, but a poor decision to sail in stormy weather led to the ship running aground in Malta. The narrative in chapters 27 and 28 are full of vivid detail on how you might try to survive a storm and how running a ship onto the shore might work in practice. It also shows how vulnerable Paul was, not only to the storm but to the possibility of being killed by the soldiers whose lives would be forfeit if their prisoners escaped.

The possibility that what seem to be divine plans could in fact go wrong takes us into the fraught territory of God's sovereignty and human freedom. In what way is God 'in control' and in what way are we – or is nature – free to mess up God's plans? God took a huge risk in making a world that is other than himself, and we live with the resultant questions of who causes what. The answer probably doesn't lie in philosophical argument or any form of human wisdom, but in flesh and blood, both Jesus' and ours. It's in our own experience that we know that both God's ways and our ways are honoured, both God's freedom and ours are fully in play.

Paul reached dry land; he might not have. We might be safe today; we might not. I was fortunate to land in Cottenham and Rampton for which I'm truly grateful and feel richly blessed. And yet, we live in uncertain times where we question the extent to which God is 'in control' of a virus that is running rampant across the globe. Many plans have been messed up by Coronavirus and will continue to be until it has been defeated.

But, as always, we live in the truth that, irrespective of the difficulties we experience, nothing, yes NOTHING, will separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. And somehow, whatever happens, that is enough.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

Best wishes,

Revd Lynda Davies

Rector@allsaintscottenham.org.uk

01954 583651