

Daily Readings

Week 2- Journey into Imagination

Beginning Sunday 8th March with:

Jesus gives a vision of the future

Matthew 24:1-14,30-35

Isaiah 6.1-8

Theme of the week:

The spiritual journey is directed by visions of the future from God

Monday 9 March

The gift of imagination

Genesis 22:15-19

15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, ¹⁶and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, ¹⁸and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice.' ¹⁹So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham lived at Beer-sheba.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

God gives Abraham a vision of the future which will inspire him to go forward. That vision is one of great blessing and increase as Abraham can imagine his children and his people well beyond his own lifetime becoming more and more numerous and passing on God's blessing to all other peoples. The vision requires Abraham to imagine beyond his own life and times and to imagine a future of a holy people.

Question for reflection:

How do you think this vision sustained Abraham during the remainder of his life?

Tuesday 10 March

Imagining the Day of the Lord

Malachi 3:1-6

3 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

5 Then I will draw near to you for judgement; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow, and the orphan, against those who thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

6 For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, have not perished.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

The prophet imagines the process of Judgement. In his vision judgement is like refining and purifying precious metal, the impurities are disposed of and the pure remainder will be loved and cherished by God. That means that there will be judgement on those who are sinners, - who have broken the ten commandments and hurt people, those who have treated others badly and refused to help them, those who have ignored or turned away from God. We have to imagine not just what the consequences of our sin are now, but what they mean in the future when we have to account for what we have done with the lives God has given us. That gift of imagination means that we can make good choices about how to live as God wants us to, - if we want to.

Question for reflection:

How do you imagine Judgement?

Wednesday 11 March

Imagining God's glory

Ezekiel 1:1, 4-14, 26-28

1 In the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God.

4 As I looked, a stormy wind came out of the north: a great cloud with brightness around it and fire flashing forth continually, and in the middle of the fire, something like gleaming amber. ⁵In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. ⁶Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings. ⁷Their legs were straight, and the soles of their feet were like the sole of a calf's foot; and they sparkled like burnished bronze. ⁸Under their wings on their four sides they had human hands. And the four had their faces and their wings thus: ⁹their wings touched one another; each of them moved straight ahead, without turning as they moved. ¹⁰As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle; ¹¹such were their faces. Their wings were spread out above; each creature had two wings, each of which touched the wing of another, while two covered their bodies. ¹²Each moved straight ahead; wherever the spirit would go, they went, without turning as they went. ¹³In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire. ¹⁴The living creatures darted to and fro, like a flash of lightning.

26 And above the dome over their heads there was something like a throne, in appearance like sapphire; and seated above the likeness of a throne was something that seemed like a human form. ²⁷Upwards from what appeared like the loins I saw something like gleaming amber, something that looked like fire enclosed all round; and downwards from what looked like the loins I saw something that looked like fire, and there was a splendour all round. ²⁸Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendour all round. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.

When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard the voice of someone speaking.

How does this passage relate to the theme?

The prophet is totally overwhelmed by a vision of God's glory. The vision is amazing, full of detail, brilliance, movement and beauty. His main impression is one of fire, brilliant darting flame, within which he can make out God's presence, but the vision is so unearthly, he struggles for adequate words to describe it. Afterwards, he is overcome by the vision and falls on his face in amazement. Such a vision raises ordinary human beings from the

mundane experiences of life and gives us something we would never forget. When, like Ezekiel, we have powerful spiritual experiences of God, whether they overwhelm us or not, they equip us to attend to God more closely and find out what he wants us to do with our lives.

Question for reflection:

How do you imagine the glory and beauty of God?

Thursday 12 March

Imagining heaven

Revelation 21:1-8

21 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'See, the home of God is among mortals.

He will dwell with them;

they will be his peoples,

and God himself will be with them;

⁴ he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more;

mourning and crying and pain will be no more,

for the first things have passed away.'

5 And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I am making all things new.' Also he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' ⁶ Then he said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who conquer will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸ But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.'

How does this passage relate to the theme?

The writer of Revelation (Apocalypse) describes a vision of the end of time. God makes everything new; everything which has gone before passes away. In this new creation, all the pain and suffering of our own world is gone. All the damage and trouble of our sinful world, - the world we must live in now - is at last removed, as God re-creates a new heaven and a new earth. Even death will not exist any more. Sin cannot exist in this new creation and so those who cling to sin cannot be part of it. In describing this vision through the power of the human imagination, we are offered a picture of our final destiny and again a choice, - to become fit for heaven, as God wishes for us, or to hang on to our sin which will make it impossible for us to inherit this new creation. We need to imagine heaven and to decide whether we want to be one of those receiving the water of life from God, - or not.

Question for reflection:

What do you imagine heaven might be like?