

*Teach us your ways O Lord and we will walk in your truth*

Luke 14 26 -33

Jesus' teachings were revolutionary and those following him found some of his teachings hard to understand and even harder to follow. Passages like our reading this morning are not comforting passages, just like last week when Jesus was offering a different perspective about who is the important guest.

He uses parables to explain his thoughts and wishes of how his followers should live their lives. Today he uses the story of a king preparing for war, weighing up the strategies and coming to conclusions of whether or not it is worth the risk and then after deliberation offering terms of peace.

Some of us like order in our lives. Planning and preparation are crucial and allows us to be less anxious because we know things are in place. I guess for some of us as we enter this vacancy it may feel as if no one is in charge and that we are being left to sort things out. There is no one at the helm- steering us forward. Those who followed Jesus expected a deliverer who would lead an army against the Roman occupation or gather a protest group to take back the Temple from those who had turned it into 'a den of robbers', maybe they too were disappointed and probably baffled by his behaviour.

But it not so dissimilar to us today. It begins with us realising that we aren't to 'bees knees' and the world or benefice doesn't revolve around one person or ourselves. As followers, and yes, we are followers, It, begins with accepting Jesus' teaching about taking the lowest place, about sharing with those who have nothing to share with us, and about seeing ourselves as servants of the one who was the servant of all. We might have to rethink our thoughts and work together a bit more.

I accept that isn't easy, he never said it would be. We live in a world where we are constantly judged on how we look, how we behave, if we have past this test or that exam. Pushing ourselves forward isn't always the best way and equally, bolstering other people's egos by chasing after the attention and approval of people who have 'made it' in the eyes of the world also isn't God's way.

Jesus taught us to not leave people behind, to be inclusive. To reach out to those who are broken right now or maybe those that are difficult to be around sometimes.

Whilst we might think the answer is to have someone to lead us would be the answer to our present situation, I want us all to think how we are going to service each other and service our communities. I think we will work it out together, there is a sense of cohesion here in the benefice. I know though that this first period will be difficult.

Our communities are struggling and will face real hardship this winter. In a vacancy there are always opportunities to try something different, to engage with the folks outside church more. We are not a 'closed shop' – we are followers of Jesus, He is our leader our light and support. He is always and should be our inspiration to come together and go forward with him in our lives. Amen