

Thought for the day 21st July 2020 from Richard Barton (All Hallows)

1 Samuel 6:1-16, Luke 21:5-19

Famines and plagues

It is easy to be blasé or even cynical about the terrible events that Jesus is predicting. For much of history there have been “wars and insurrections”, it has often been the case that “Nations have arisen against nations”, most potentially apocalyptically in the last century during the two world wars. There have certainly been many tragic earthquakes with much loss of life. And there have of course been “famines and plagues”. Even today many people struggle for the lack of food due crop failure resulting in part from climate change and also the injustices of world trade. And as for plagues, I hardly need to say more. But it gets worse! Jesus tells us we will be persecuted for our faith by authorities, betrayed by family and friends, and some will have to die for their faith and all will be hated because of it. Whilst for many of us in this country we don't need to lay down our lives for our faith, in some places in the world this is a distinct risk, and amongst those who come to us during seeking asylum we need to hear those stories of courage.

But at the end of this passage Jesus tells us, possibly contradicting what he has just said about death (!) “... but not a hair of your head will perish”. And “By your endurance you will gain your souls”.

The signs of the end of times may seem to happen with depressing frequency in our history, and we may or may not experience being hassled for being a Christian like those in the early church. But Jesus tells us to hang on in there, to endure and gain eternal life.

In the passage from Samuel, David is the unlikely choice for a new king of Israel. David who goes up against Goliath, someone who could easily have caused the end of David's time! But “not a hair of his head perished”.

Perhaps we need to read on to other words from Jesus in Johns gospel, which always give me much encouragement.

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”