

Thought for the Day 28 July 2020 from Adriaan van Klinken (All Hallows)

[1 Samuel 10.17-27](#) / [Luke 22.31-38](#)

Disappointment

I'm writing this thought for the day just after my husband and I have come home from a weekend in the Peak district. It was wonderful to be away for a few days in a very different – beautifully green and hilly – environment. It was a welcome escape from the mess in our house where a building project has been going on for months (they say it's now almost finished, really!). Yet when we got home and my husband went to inspect what progress the builders had made in our absence, he was disappointed. Not only for the lack of progress, but also because they hadn't followed the instructions he had given them for a part of the job.

Disappointment is an all too human experience. And as our readings today remind us, it's not only a human experience. It's a divine one, too. Samuel expresses God's disappointment that the people of Israel are asking for a king, as if God's direct rule over them is not good enough. "I have liberated you from Egypt and have saved you from trouble", God says, "but now you reject me and want to have a king?" In the reading from Luke, we can hear Jesus' disappointment when speaking to Peter, his most fervent disciple, whom he knows will deny him three times the next day.

There's lots of popular psychology about how we, as humans, can deal with disappointment. It usually suggests that we should begin by managing our expectations. In many cases, that's useful advice. (For instance, do not expect builders to be perfectionists.) But as a general rule, this is too cheap. Because having certain – realistic – expectations is part of human relationships, and also of God's relationship with us.

In the Book of Samuel, God does not stay in disappointment. The people of Israel get their king (although he is hiding) who has been chosen by God. And Jesus may have been disappointed with Peter, yet Peter is chosen to be the rock on which Christ builds his church. The key here is not lowering expectations, but forgiveness and starting the relationship afresh. As Desmond Tutu put it, "there's no future without forgiveness". This applies to God's relationship to us and to our relationships with each other. Let's keep having expectations – of ourselves and of others –, but let's be forgiving in situations of disappointment.