

20 January, Epiphany 3
Evensong, Day of announcement

Psalm 96
Ezekiel 2.1-3.4
Galatians 1.11-24

Journeys are much in my mind at the moment.

- Wise men
- Holy Family Egypt and back
- Jesus in Galilee, baptism
- Holy Land. Last Sunday I was in Jerusalem. Sepulchre. St George's. Bar mitzvah – lesson last week in Jerusalem. Shepherds

In the psalm, life's journey flashing before me

- Cantate domino, Ascribe unto the Lord, O worship the Lord
- Carlisle, Nottingham, Sherwood, Dublin, Durham, Edward's solo

And my life's journey now moves on a step, as you may have heard this morning, **and if not ...**

Journeying is all about change

Newman: 'To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often'

Heraclitus: *We both step and do not step in the same river.*

So what to do in the face of change?

Ezekiel lived at time when the world must have seemed to be falling apart through unpredictability and change. 'Don't be afraid, though briars and thorns are all around you and you live among scorpions.'

Palestinian Christians

He urged them on in faith. 'eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it. So I ate it, and it tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth.'

Advice to taste what comes our way, take up the unexpected challenges that we are presented with. And the challenge that is before me was unexpected– I was amazed to have phone call last September.

Being sent – also message in MP, Jeremiah: 'I appointed you a prophet to the nations.' Then I said, 'Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, I am only a boy; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.'

So on we go. Just when we think we're getting the hang of it, something happens to disturb our complacency. Paul and Galatians.

Jewish-Christians from Palestine had visited the Galatians after Paul had left and persuaded some of them that, contrary to Paul, salvation required observance of Jewish laws, including circumcision. Paul writes to rebuke the Galatians, and is full of passion, anger, and drama.

Read Paul again

Our journey *through* life is, in fact, a call to journey *into* Life - into fullness of life, which God has opened to us through Jesus the Christ. If we are open to be led by His light, then - like the Magi of old - we shall find ourselves on a journey that forces us to take risks and that will radically change us, from inside out.

Now I set out once again. I don't like being bored – but this is the 5th move in 10 years. Poor Susie.

We ask about change: is it right for me?

My pride starts agonising. But here is this opportunity: Ezekiel: eat this scroll I am giving you and fill your stomach with it: stop moaning and get on with it.

So off I go again: a restlessness so well expressed by, of course, George Herbert

Play on rest – state of peace, verb to rest, remainder

The Pulley

When God at first made man,
Having a glasse of blessings standing by;
Let us (said he) poure on him all we can:

Let the worlds riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way;
Then beautie flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure
Rest in the bottome lay.

For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewell also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts in stead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlesnesse:
Let him be rich and wearie, that at least,
If goodnesse leade him not, yet wearinesse
May tosse him to my breast.

In this journey, we don't know what the future has in store. Bunyan

Christian said to Evangelist, Whither must I fly? Then said Evangelist, pointing with his finger over a very wide field, Do you see yonder Wicket-gate? The Man said, No. Then said the other, Do you see yonder shining Light? He said, I think I do. Then said Evangelist, Keep that Light in your eye, and go up directly thereto: so shalt thou see the Gate; at which, when thou knockest, it shall be told thee what thou shalt do.

Faith in God and Christ Jesus will, I hope, lead me on in the encircling gloom to the shining light. Faith, which for an Anglican like myself, is revealed in Holy Scripture, in reason, in experience and in tradition.

And Ezekiel reminds us of the need to be stubborn and hard-headed in pursuing God's will. The message we have to proclaim will probably not be popular. We must proclaim it all the same, since it brings hope and life to the weary and cynical world. And I could tell you about the hope I saw last week in Bethany from one of the world's saints. But another time.

I've not gone yet, of course, but when I do, is it too much to hope that in the 21 months I'll have been with you, some of you will have had cause to say, as Paul did, 'And they praised God because of me.'