

REFLECTION ON THIS SUNDAYS READINGS.

Isaiah 51; v 1-6. The opening verse of this reading is truly inspirational. "Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord. Look to the rock from which you were hewn and the quarry from which you were dug". This verse rightly stresses the need to both listen and look to God, a theme that runs throughout this particular reading. Here and in many other places in scripture, God is depicted as a utterly dependable rock. Many of you may also remember the Chorus, "Jesus is the rock of my Salvation and his banner over me is Love". In today's Gospel reading Matthew 16, v 13-20; Jesus refers to Peter as the Rock upon which his Church will be built. How often in life do we hear someone describing a partner or friend as a Rock? So, the image of the Rock is used in many and diverse ways in scripture and in life in general. In our Isaiah reading we are instructed to look to the rock from which we were hewn. Hewn is a key word, and Isaiah's meaning is clear God created us, shaped us and formed us. Just as a stonemason craves rock eking out a thing of beauty, so God has created you. St. Paul would later rightly proclaim "you are God's work of art".

Kintsugi is an ancient art form, in which broken pottery is repaired and transformed; often the restored piece is far more beautiful than the original. What a wonderful vibrant and physical image of salvation and transformation this is. In today's reading from Romans, Paul urges the Christian community "to be transformed by the renewing of your minds".

We are fortunate indeed at Trinity in our congregation to have a stonemason Brian Ansell, who a few years back during Holy Week, carved out of stone for us the Methodist symbolic Orb. Brian will be working on six stone carved Worship stations to be permanently placed in the garden at Kirton. These will be in Memory of the Father of Rev'd Jo Jacobs, who is kindly sponsoring this project. I know they will inspire us all and help us in a most vivid and practical way to "Look to the rock from which we were hewn".

Before lockdown, at Seaton Road Church, Jill Tempest led us in wonderfully reflective Godly Play presentation, which told the story of salvation history using stones (rocks).

It is well worth spending sometime this week doing your own Bible research into how many references to stones in the Bible you can find? Here are just a few to get you started.

- The Ten Commandments are written on tablets of stone;
- In the desert Jesus is tempted to turn stone into bread and
- In 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 4 and part of verse 5 we read "come to him, (Jesus), a living stone, thorough rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house".

I conclude todays reflection with what I believe may be the final reference to stone in the Bible, a reference that I hope will give you great comfort and encouragement. Please look up Revelation Ch. 2, verse 17. You may also like to reflect upon Singing the Faith 434, Rock of Ages cleft for me and STF 628, Faithful one so unchanging.

A Prayer.

*Great God, Rock of our Salvation,
keep us strong in the faith with our eyes fixed on you.
Help us to comfort those in need with your tender strength and mercy.
May we be your living stones,
by your Sprit building your kingdom on earth.*

Amen.

Rev'd Diane