**THOUGHT FOR THE DAY**

**SUNDAY JUNE 19TH 2022**

Based on 1 Kings;19 v1 -15a and Psalm 42

The last two and a half years have probably been the most unsettling times that the world has collectively known. Do we know of anywhere which has NOT been affected by the Corona Virus? I have not got a definitive answer for that but I suspect it is a resounding “NO”, and if there is somewhere then I have yet to hear of it. Life changed in many ways for all of us and one of the biggest shocks to “believers” of all faiths was the closing of places of worship……it had NEVER been known.

When I was researching for my “lesson plan” for today ( in joke for all teachers there) ,I was reliably informed by many learned sources that the theme of today’s Old Testament lesson was, or is, about

**UNSETTLING TIMES**

**SOMETHING WE DON’T SEE COMING**

**SOMETHING UNEXPECTED.**

WELL covid CERTAINLY TICKED ALL THOSE BOXES. But, how interesting it has been, to learn that “worship” attendance increased ALMOST exponentially during the time of closed churches, mosques temples and the like. Those increases were 99% via modern technology; ZOOM and LIVE STREAMING. How is that for the **UNEXPECTED?**

In the passage prior to our OT reading, Elijah (definitely one of God’s number one followers) is told to go give a very strongly worded message to Ahab. “If you don’t stop your people worshipping Baal, then you will pay the price”. He was also told however to scarper quickly after delivering the message (nobody loves the messenger, and boy oh boy was that true when the drought hit the country).

Elijah stayed away for three years and when he went back he was able to prove, after various tests, that God (Jehova) is the strongest, the best deity. But then he is hit by the **UNEXPECTED;** **SOMETHING HE DIDN’T SEE COMING**;….Jezebel!(An interesting point was raised here in my research. David didn’t see Bathsheba coming! Samson didn’t see Delilah coming! There is definitely room for another lesson here just based on those three women).

HOWEVER….. back to Elijah. After resisting as best he could, he exhaustedly takes himself to the wilderness, thinking that God had deserted him. Weak and weary he is however sustained and finally hears God speaking to him; not in the powerful earthquake; not in the violent storm; not in the consuming fire;(three terrifically powerful things) but **UNEXPECTEDLY** in the silence after all the noise. THE STILL SMALL VOICE OF CALM. God had been with him all along but Elijah had expected Him to reveal Himself in power and strength. The **UNEXPECTED** way was God’s however.

During the unexpectedness of COVID here at St. Mark’s we were hit with even more **UNEXPECTEDNESS** when Father Ian retired. Although he was approaching the age when he could retire, there were still some among us who **DID NOT SEE THAT COMING**. It led to more unsettling times. But, ever so, ever so, quietly, God spoke to many of us in so many **ways, creating a wonderful CAN DO ethos which eventually resulted in something UNEXPECTED**…. The Diocese decided NOT to close St Mark’s. We certainly **HADN’T SEEN THAT COMING.**

In our Psalm today we heard of the psalmist’s need for God. Everything is looking bleak for him, just like for Elijah after he battles with Ahab and Jezebel and the priests of Baal, but when things look bleakest, despair is overcome by putting faith in God.

**Why are you cast down my soul? Why are you disquieted within me?**

**Hope in God for I shall again praise Him My help and my God.**

Is that not just exactly what we have experienced over the last 12 months or so?

1 **UNSETTLING TIMES**—how can we go forward? How can we survive?

2 **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**—we were offered a solution

3 **DIDN’T SEE THAT COMING**—there were one or two huge shocks…… BUT….. what we didn’t see coming when we were left with no priest back in October 2020, was the “phoenix rising from the ashes”, as St Mark’s, mainly under its own steam. goes from strength to strength. No earthquake revelations No stormy announcements (plenty of announcements, not too much storm), but when all was despairing, because we kept faith with God, God has quietly worked some wonderful wonders…. **THAT WE DIDN’T SEE COMING**.

A good lesson plan has to have a beginning (our readings), a middle (my waffle) and a good end. So… a few hymn lines that seem appropriate. We had one of the most obvious just before the Gospel, “Oh still small voice of calm.”

But also “God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform”, and from the same hymn “God is his own interpreter, and He will make it plain”.

I personally think that He has been making quite a few things very plain recently.

**UNEXPECTEDLY**  ! **Judith Gibbons**