

**St Gabriel's Family Communion. Sunday 21 Mar 2010.**

**Isa 43:16-21; Phil 3:4b-14; John 12:1-8**

Today's readings all about movement – in a forward direction – towards something. Something known and something unknown.

Isa 43:18-19: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

Israel in exile after conquest now dwelling in the past. Glory times of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; of Moses of David and Solomon. Conveniently forgetting the bad times, their forgetfulness of God that has brought them to this place. God hasn't forgotten them. Sending a wake up call. Stop living in the past. Live in the present *'See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?'* and look to the future. *'I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.'*

Love to reminisce about the past. How things were. Favourite memories. St Gabriel's and people on Popley. Glory days of Bill Ind – every successor measured by his standard. Sometimes memory serves us well, can see thru rose tinted. Some things are better left behind. All share some of those!

Paul's CV, his background and history – how does he view it now? *But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

If anyone could boast about himself it would be Paul. Not the case. Something much more important, more vital has come into Paul's life that demands more than just knowledge, information or learning - a personal relationship with a living God and Saviour. Doesn't live in the past or dwell on what he had or indeed what might have been. What counts is the now and where it is leading him and nothing is going to hold him back. Refusing to be caught in the same rut as others.

What hold us to the past?

Jesus at Bethany: A farewell dinner with his friends. Lazarus, Mary & Martha. Judas and the others perhaps there too. Extraordinary incident of perfume – worth a year's wages Judas objects. <sup>7</sup>*"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."*

Again this dynamic movement away from the past through the present to the future. For Jesus it is the journey to the cross. Not a pleasant prospect in the short term but for the glory of God and saving of humankind in the long.

Other common thread is suffering. The Israelites in exile, Paul's sufferings, Jesus' passion. Out of each comes glory. Isa *'a people formed for my praise'*; Paul, <sup>8</sup>*What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, Jesus!*

How does this apply to us; to St Gabriel's fellowship? Are we growing and changing or dwelling in the past? Tough challenging questions to ask ourselves. Do we really want to see things like a Youth worker? Do we want to see our worship grow? Do we want to see our fellowship and understanding of scripture grow? Do we want to grow or would we prefer to be as we are, as we have been?

Too easy to be comfortable about our faith! To skip church on Sunday, to let our minds wander while we're here. To not support social events or Lent lunches. To say it's okay I don't need to be in a group! The Israelites grew complacent about God and look where it got them.

We are on the verge of something new! Do we not perceive it? It's springing up all around us – a hunger and thirst for God – and God is making a way through the desert wastelands. We are that way if we so choose to be....