

Trinity 2 2021 – 13th June

9.30 Holy Communion Cuxton	Ezekiel 17 vv 22-24 p844 II Corinthians 5 vv 6-10
11.00 Holy Communion Halling	p1160 Mark 4 vv 26-34 p1006

OLORD, who never failest to help and govern them whom thou dost bring up in thy stedfast fear and love; Keep us, we beseech thee, under the protection of thy good providence, and make us to have a perpetual fear and love of thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

We missed out on singing Whitsun hymns this year, as on so much else. Here's a favourite of mine. Don't worry; I'm not going to sing it.

When God of old came down from heaven, in power and wrath he came
Before His feet the clouds were riven, half darkness and half flame;

We start at Mt Sinai. The Israelites have been liberated from Egyptian slavery and escaped Pharaoh's pursuing army, miraculously passing through the Red Sea. They have come to the Holy Mountain where God will make a covenant with them – the Old Testament. They are to be a holy nation, a royal priesthood. There were thunder and lighting and fire and smoke. The mountain trembled and the Voice of God was heard calling Moses to the summit where he was to receive the law of God. *You shall be holy because I am holy.* The people were both awed and terrified and promised to abide by God's commandments. To keep the Law would be life. To turn from God would mean death. It was their choice, as it is our choice.

But when He came the second time, He came in power and love;
softer than gale at morning prime hovered His holy Dove.

It's the same God, no less powerful, no less loving. The Word is made flesh. God is born in human form. The infant Christ grows to be a man. He comes to the River Jordan to be baptised by John. God is not now manifest in the terrifying majesty which the Israelites experienced at Sinai, but in a human child and a young man Who receives the gift of God's Holy Spirit in the form of a dove - emblem of peace, deliverance and creation.

The fires that rushed on Sinai down in sudden torrents dread,
Now gently light, a glorious crown, on every sainted head.

It's now the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, ten days after our Lord's Ascension into heaven. The apostles *were all with one accord in one place.* They had seen God's glory manifested in Christ's miracles. They had heard God's Voice in the teaching of Jesus. They had seen how God would have us live in His everyday life. No less terrible than the fires on Mount Sinai was the Cross on which Jesus had hung and suffered, forsaken by most of His friends, but witnessed by John and His mother and some other women, His executioners and a largely hostile mob. The women and the apostles had seen the empty tomb. *He is not here: for he is risen as he said.* The emptiness of the tomb was a manifestation of the greatness of God, to which the angels bore witness. Hundreds of people saw Jesus in the succeeding forty days and then His apostles and maybe some others saw Him ascend into

heaven. God makes a new covenant with His people, a New Testament sealed with the Blood of Jesus.

Our Ezekiel reading today was about that mysterious new beginning. The old covenant had failed because the people of God had let God down. It is our human nature to fail. It is God's nature to remain faithful – to judge, to punish where necessary, to redeem and to restore. This He promises in the Bible and this He fulfils in Jesus.

The Church receives the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God grows as a crop grows in the field, we know *not how, for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.* The Holy Spirit is the principle of life and the Kingdom of God grows we know not how

And as on Israel's awe-struck ear the voice exceeding loud,
The trump, that angels quake to hear, thrilled from the deep dark cloud;

So, when the Spirit of our God came down His flock to find,
A voice from heaven was heard abroad, a rushing mighty wind.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Just as the soil and the sun and the rain and the air make the plants grow, so the Holy Spirit gives us life and makes us grow. On Sinai, the infinite power & love of God is manifest in the earthquake, wind and fire. Our experience of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is one more manifestation of God's love and power in us and to us and through us to the world.

It fills the Church of God; it fills the sinful world around;
Only in stubborn hearts and wills no place for it is found.

In our epistle reading, Paul is talking about the fact that we have no need to fear death. We live in Christ here and now. The Holy Spirit dwells within us. This is an earnest, a guarantee and a foretaste of what is to come in the next world. *We walk by faith, not by sight, but there will come a time when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is...And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (I John 3^{2&3}). As Paul says, there is a judgment. *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* God makes His Justice, His Mercy & His Love manifest to us in so many ways. He speaks to us through so many different media. We pray that we may have the grace to hear His Voice however He speaks us, to hear and to obey.

Come Lord, come Wisdom, Love, and Power, open our ears to hear;
Let us not miss the accepted hour; save, Lord, by love or fear.