

Time to leg it!

Psalm 147; Hosea 14; 1 Corinthians 12¹⁻¹¹

*He hath no pleasure in the strength of an horse: neither delighteth he in any man's legs.
But the Lord's delight is in them that fear him: and put their trust in his mercy.
[Psalm 147¹¹⁻¹²]*

There is a real sense of disappointment that, in this service, we have to note that this is the last service for the Prayer Book Society Birmingham Branch. It is difficult to know exactly what to say unless one were to read a Eulogy.

However, it is the demise of the Society and not the Prayer Book that we acknowledge and mark: the Prayer Book seems to have had something of a resurgence. Certainly *The Times* (and possibly a more left-wing newspaper - generally with more spelling mistakes) acknowledged that young people seem to enjoy more formal worship, like ceremonial (including incense) and positively prefer more traditional language in worship. We simply regret that there are so few who are prepared to commit themselves to anything and certainly not to anything that involves a committee.

I couldn't resist using the Psalm for my text for today. Those of us who have been in choirs will often have sniggered at having to sing *neither delighteth he in any man's legs!*

So how can these two verses from the Psalm help us today?

- ✠ First, the whole Psalm tell us that God remains dependable even when people are not. The Psalmist has rehearsed how God is consistently there to build up, to embrace the outcast, to heal the broken hearted and to bind up wounds. It is this God we can depend on for security, for peaces, for food and for very particular care. This is the God we can praise and to whom we engage music as a vehicle for our praise.
- ✠ The verse where we discover that God has no pleasure in *horses* or *men's legs* is important. It would be natural to feel that such surrender as is represented today is a failure. But this God - this God who is worthy of our worship - this God expects us to relax into that theology adequately and consistency expressed in the Book of Common Prayer: that God is not limited by the actions of humans. That sense of providence is expressed in the collect for the wonderfully quintessential *Sexagesima Sunday*:

*O Lord God,
who sees that we put not our trust in any thing that we do:
Mercifully grant that by thy power we
may be defended against all adversity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I don't know what your legs are like, but I do know that the growth of the kingdom of God isn't dependent on mine!

- ✠ Then we take heart from the word translated *mercy* in the Psalm is from the Hebrew word, *hesed*, which is the word for God's covenant love. This is a love that is never dependent on us or on what we achieve but is consistent and dependable because God is consistent and dependable. As a people of faith this matters more than anything else.

Thank you to all those who have been committed to the work of God and of the Church in promoting the Book of Common Prayer. It will live on and we dare to hope for some resurgence in its popularity as we dare to hope that it will continue to witness to the God who is both its subject and object.

It is never about what we do but always about what God does!