

A grand day out



God of surprises, give us eyes to see you at work in our lives, not only in the times of crisis when we feel our need of you, but also in the ordinariness of each day, that we may always know your power to help and save. Amen.


Church music

Part II – straight to the heart

by Andrew Lyon

I'm sure that for some people music "gets in the way" of worship; that harmony and descants distract rather than enhance, but I've always loved the music of the Church in all its guises – from medieval plainsong to renaissance polyphony, Methodist hymns, Anglican psalm chants, modern Catholic Mass music, Eastern Orthodox music and evangelical

worship songs. Nothing has nurtured my faith more.

I like it, not just because the tunes tickle my ears, but because music is a vehicle for communicating something to my heart, bypassing my intellect and heading straight inside to my soul. It moves me quickly to tears when a beautiful melody is crafted so skilfully to combine with the words it sets, like a glove that fits just right. When that happens, it helps me more than anything else to feel deep within me that God knows me and loves me. The words from "My Song is Love Unknown", by Samuel Crossman, set to music by John Ireland, spring to mind: "This is my friend, in whose sweet praise / I all my days could gladly spend." 


Gillian Cooper *reflects on* Mark 11:1-11

“When he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve”

Mark's description of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem reads like an account of a tourist's lovely day out in the city. Jesus and his friends have a good look around and then head back to the accommodation for dinner. It is not exactly what we might expect of the coming of the promised king to the place of his enthronement. There is, admittedly, a bit of a processional feel about the journey in, with its psalm singing and palm waving, but it is all fairly brief and low key. Has anything happened?

Of course it has. This very ordinary day out is charged with

symbolic meaning. The rider on the lowly colt is indeed the one who comes in the name of the Lord. The kingdom of David is on its way, though very differently from expectations. This is the first scene in a drama that will be played out over the coming days. We who know the rest of the story read with dread in our hearts. We know what the crowd will shout next Friday. Jesus will not be on a colt and his disciples will not be with him.


With his straightforward account of a nice day out, Mark reminds us that it is in the context of the ordinary, the human, that God acts. The tourist turns out to be the world's saviour. 

Cities of the Bible

Samaria

by Caroline Fletcher

Samaria was the region sandwiched between Galilee and Judaea. It had belonged to Israel's northern kingdom until it was captured by the Assyrians, who took much of its Jewish population into exile. It was home to the religious group, the Samaritans, who practised a distinct form of Judaism with their own temple on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20).

By New Testament times the relationship between the Samaritans and the Jews of Galilee and Judaea had deteriorated. Jews believed the Samaritan faith was corrupt and tensions increased after the destruction of the Gerizim temple in around 110 BC by the Maccabean leader John Hyrcanus. The Gospels reflect this. For instance, Samaritans refused to let Jesus pass through their village simply because he was on his way to Jerusalem in Judaea, and Jesus' Galilean disciples wanted to retaliate by casting fire down on the Samaritans (Luke 9:51-54). Jesus challenged such prejudice by making a Samaritan the hero of his Good Samaritan parable. 

“Remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1 Thessalonians 1:3