

*St. David's Day – 5 March 2023*

*Jonah 3: 1-10 & Luke 11: 29-32*

Today we celebrate our patronal day. Saint David's famous word was "Do the little things" which he preached on the Sunday before his death. 'Do the little things' is today a very well-known phrase in Welsh and has proved an inspiration to many.

We live in a time where signs are important in our life. It is natural for anyone to ask for signs to prove their authenticity. In the Old Testament reading we heard about Jonah, a prophet whom God commissions to warn the citizens of Nineveh that God is about to destroy them for their bad behaviour. Nineveh was the most populous city in the Assyrian empire. The Jews hated the Assyrian empire because they demolished the Northern kingdom of Israel. So they hate Nineveh also and Jonah feels the same way. Rather than take a chance that the Ninevites might repent, and God would spare them, so he takes off in the opposite direction. However, God brought him back and Ninevites repented and the whole city was saved. The saving act of God has no limits. It is different from our limited understanding of God's plan.

In the gospel, we heard Jesus using some harsh words to the people who ask for signs. At first hearing, it can be heard as rude. However, we need to look at the

reading from v.14 to 36 as one block. But unfortunately, our lectionary is only from v29-32 for St. David's Day. In the previous section, Jesus has done quite a lot of miracles and still, the crowd is not fully convinced about who Jesus is.

Jesus calls his generation an evil one, because "it seeks a sign." Many of Jesus' contemporaries are not convinced by his words, his miracles, or even his assertion that he has the power to forgive sins. They want something more. We are a generation who is not settled with things, - we want more.

Jesus could just as well have been speaking to our generation as to his. We are so accustomed to being over-stimulated by the ready access to data and information that our technology gives us, that reflection and contemplation can easily be pushed to the margin of our existence. The need for constant novelty is a sign of an unsettled mind and heart.

If we neglect to ponder our life and its circumstances, we will be unlikely to discover the subtleties of God's activity in our life.

Jesus had already given many signs attesting to his Messiahship. He promises one more, "the sign of Jonah." In a way, it is natural to want signs to verify our convictions. However, the signs that God sends may not be what we expect.

We need to position ourselves in this story of Jonah. The disciples acted like Jonah when they want to stop someone from driving out demons because “*he was not following us*” or argued about who would be greatest in Jesus’ kingdom. So it is time to evaluate ourselves are we like Jonah to become a stumbling block to others to receive God’s love and mercy?

Jesus identified with the “*Ninevites*” of his day, those rejected by the self-righteous “*Jonah*”s. For this, I believe Jesus was sent, and for this, he was killed.

On this patronal festival day and also at the season of lent, our challenge is where we stand. With Ninevites of our time or be like self-righteous Jonah. Today is also the time to re-evaluate ourselves individually and also as the parish – “*Do the little things*”. It is also the time to ponder our life in the presence of God - to pray - to discover how the Lord wants to lead us as an individual and also as a community.

AMEN