

Friends

This Sunday is “stir up Sunday” and “Christ the King”. We are also celebrating the baptism of my newest grandson, scheduled to arrive at a nativity play near you, because we all love it when there is a new baby in the manger. However, I am not going to write about any of these things today. The richness of the day is a gift to preachers everywhere; why steal our thunder by offering you a preview?

Instead, I am wanting you to think not about the day you are reading it, but the day I am writing this: November the 19th. This day is International Men’s Day, a global awareness day for issues that men face, including abuse, homelessness, suicide and violence. None of these are of course exclusive to men, but it is sometimes forgotten that homelessness and suicide particularly are disproportionately impacting one half of society.

The Bible often receives a bad press because so many of the stories it tells are about men. In the society and times in which it is written, this is unsurprising. But does it offer any wisdom or support for men in particular? Does the Bible speak prophetically into the difficulties of today’s experiences in terms of maleness?

The Bible is a collection of writings, some more or less historical, some letters, some wisdom narratives, some poetry, designed to chronicle and aid humanity’s developing relationship with God. From Adam in the garden, to Moses in the wilderness, through the prophets and on to Peter, James and John in their boats and Zaccheus in his sycamore tree, from Paul on the road to Damascus to John on the island of Patmos, God speaks to those who are prepared to listen.

As we try to hear God’s voice in Scripture today, it is worth remembering that God speaks to all who listen, irrespective of gender. Psalm 85:8 tells us: I will listen to what the Lord God is saying, for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.

God is speaking to all, but this week in recognition of this day, let us turn our prayers to those men who are struggling, recognising that the world can be a difficult place, and that

difficulty may be different across the gender divides, but it does us all a disservice if we pretend that it does not exist.

God bless, Vicci