

Jerusalem

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* 2 Samuel 5:1-5. 9-10

David the shepherd boy has become king of Israel. He has survived giants and armies, hatred and betrayal. He has been clever and resourceful. He is good-looking, talented, popular with women, as well as one of the lads. And he has God on his side.

The first seven and a half years of David's reign seem uneventful – they pass by in a single sentence. All we know is that he was based at Hebron. Hebron was already a significant place in ancient Israel. The book of Genesis tells us it was where Abraham bought a plot of land as a burial place for his wife Sarah. It was the first bit of the land of Israel owned by Israel's ancestor. It is the obvious place for the king to hold court.

But Hebron represents the past, and David's reign is about the future. Ever the effective strategist, David captures the city of Jerusalem from its Canaanite residents, and there he establishes the "City of David". Jerusalem has no historical or religious associations. The people's new capital city is David's place. There his palace will be, and there also God's temple, for ever associated with David and his successors.

So David gives us Jerusalem. Beautiful and doomed. Conquered and rebuilt. Essential to three world religions and many warring peoples. A place of hatred, tragedy and death. And a place where, through David's descendant, hatred has been defeated, death has been conquered, and God's love has triumphed. ☺

Making Ordinary Time anything but

by Caroline Hodgson

We're deep into Ordinary Time – that part of the Christian liturgical year that falls outside Advent, Christmastide, Lent and Eastertide.

The origin of "ordinary" in this context comes from the word "ordinal", referring to the system by which the weeks are counted. So strictly speaking it's not ordinary in the sense of being mundane

or routine. Even so, it raises an interesting point, because we tend to discount things as ordinary, to be got through or passed over – whether that's ordinary time (a rainy weekend), or places (where the bins are kept), objects or even people. But the reality is that every nanosecond of existence, every millimetre of God's Earth, every atom of existence and each and every person is worthy of being treasured and celebrated. Now I'm not suggested we start praising God over an egg whisk, but that we practise becoming more engaged with the wonder of creation all around us. So over the next three weeks I'd like to share a practical exercise for keeping Ordinary Time anything but ordinary. ☺

We pray, Lord for the peace of Jerusalem, for reconciliation between all those who live there, and all who from a distance call it home. May it be once more a beacon of hope and a sign of your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Walking with Poppy

World made new

by Gillian Cooper

There has been a thunderstorm after the hot and dry weather, and the air is fresh. Poppy sniffs the air from the door and takes a tentative step out. She does not want to get her paws wet, but the scent is enticing. The walk along the path to the playing

field takes us even longer than usual – the rain has brought out the smells and every inch has to be sniffed. Meanwhile I notice the raindrops on the bushes and the new green shoots on the allotment plants. Between Poppy's nose and my eyes, we are experiencing a world made new.

How much more, we hope, will we rejoice when we experience God's new world, at the end of our lives or at our world's end, when we breathe the fresh air of God's love and marvel at the sparkling glory of the new heaven and new earth. ☺

“David was the last one we would have chosen to fight the giant, but he was chosen of God.”

Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), American evangelist and publisher