

A matter of taste

Ricarda Witcombe *reflects on*
Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22

Psalm 34 is an acrostic poem: each line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In fact, Psalm 25 is the same and they form a pair: Psalm 25 is a prayer for help; Psalm 34 is a thanksgiving for help.

Each psalm gives an ordered shape into which we can place our own experience. Our difficulties are not denied, the psalm tells of fears and troubles. It also speaks of the closeness of God in the midst of life. It is a psalm of trust. The writer has sought God in a time of fear, and God has drawn near and delivered them.

Unlike Psalm 22 where the experience is of abandonment, this writer knows that their cries of distress are heard. In fact, the experience is of being encircled in safety by the angel of the Lord. So this psalm calls us all to "taste and see that the Lord is good".

When we taste something, we try it for ourselves and learn what it is like. It is deeply personal, and the act of tasting itself is one of absolute trust. May we too dare to trust the goodness of God, and find the same refuge for our battered lives. ☺



Crispin and Crispinian

by Caroline Hodgson

Saints Crispin and Crispinian are commemorated in the *Common Worship* lectionary tomorrow. They are thought to have been twin brothers, born to a noble Roman family in the third century. It is said that they fled persecution for their faith and ended up at Soissons, to the north-east of Paris. In imitation of St Paul they worked with their hands, making shoes and earning enough to support themselves and help those who were poor. They preached Christianity to the

Gauls during the day and made shoes by night.

During the Diocletian persecution they were brought before Maximianus Herculeus, the co-emperor. At first he tried to turn them from their faith with promises and threats, but they replied, "Thy threats do not terrify us, for Christ is our life, and death is our gain." They were tortured and thrown into the river with millstones around their necks, but managed to swim to the opposite riverbank. Eventually, however, they were beheaded at the command of Maximianus in around AD 285. They are the patron saints of cobblers, curriers, tanners and leather workers. ☺

“The Bible without the Holy Spirit is a sundial by moonlight.”

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

Faithful God, in the turbulence of our lives may we know the peace that comes from trusting in your goodness and may our own souls find refuge in the assurance of your love. Amen.

Food in the Bible

by Caroline Fletcher

Fig leaves are large, making them a good choice for Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness (Genesis 3:7). Their large abundant foliage also means fig trees provide shelter from the sun. This is probably why the disciple Nathanael was sitting under one when Jesus noticed him (John 1:48).

The story of Jesus cursing a fig tree for not bearing fruit outside

the fig season (Mark 11:12-14) puzzles many. However, the tree looked as if it might be fruitful because it was already in leaf. Jesus' curse may, then, have been a warning about the dangers of only appearing to be spiritually fruitful and not genuinely so.

Fresh figs don't keep, so they were dried and squashed together into clumps called "cakes". These must have been tasty, for Abigail persuaded David not to attack her people by offering him 200 fig cakes (1 Samuel 25:18). Less appetisingly, figs were applied as a healing poultice to King Hezekiah's boil (2 Kings 20:7). ☺