

Unchanging Nature of God – Sermon for Heritage Weekend – September 2017**8am Sermon**

May the words of my lips and the thoughts and meditations of all our hearts be always acceptable in thy sight; O Lord our strength and our Redeemer

I would like to start by asking you a question. What is different about St. Michael's today? Not sure? OK I'll let you know - there are a few small changes around such as a different altar frontal, different banner on the wall, these are just two small changes

Each one of us has seen change. Change is part of our lives. We have known family and friends being born, growing up, getting married and dying and each one of these events leaves an memory, an imprint in our lives; but change is not just limited to the progression of time; society also changes.

Society has changed enormously over our lifetimes. If we just take a look at one small aspect of our home life, the television. I am going to be bold and say that each one of us can remember a time when there were only four channels and they were only on for a selected hours each day, some of you may also remember a time before TV, my grandparents purchased their first TV to witness the coronation of her majesty Queen Elizabeth the second, and for some families here today they would also have purchased their first ever TV for the same event. Nowadays the majority of households have at least one TV, with several different channels to choose from which are available all day.

However change is not just something limited to private events and the societies of the second millennium; change has always happened.

This weekend, as part of the National Heritage Open Days, we are holding celebrations of the history of our church, and at St. Michael's are focusing on the seventeenth century. A century which saw amazing change. England was torn apart by civil war, and with any civil war, family and friends were divided and yet people were willing to make a very public statement as to which side they supported as evidenced here at St. Michael's.

In addition the seventeenth century saw the finalisation of the Book of Common Prayer which we are using today (although we have a couple of recent changes in this morning's service) and the publication of the King James Bible – one of the very first in English – a version of the bible that is still in use at St. Michael's and in many of our homes today. Yet the development of the Book of Common Prayer, like a lot of other changes, was not entirely welcome and change was resisted.

One of the underpinning aspects of the book of common prayer was a desire that everyone heard bible verses in the services, and as such the services contain lots of different verses, the different compilers knew that the bible showed people the nature of God,

While we now have different versions of the bible to choose from, and these have been built from more recent discoveries of ancient manuscripts, the message of the bible has remained the same.

The message that God has a plan for His world, the world he created, God also has a plan for each of us and that he sent His only Son into the world so that we may have eternal life. This message has not changed over the years

Throughout the bible, we are reminded that whatever we do, as individuals and as a society, God is still there for us, he is unchanging in His love for us. Time and time again in the bible, especially in

the Old Testament, there are stories of people turning away from God and then being brought back. God did not leave them, he did not finish with them and the same is true today God never finishes with us, his love for us is immeasurable.

The writer of Hebrews summed it up perfectly in this verse "[Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever](#)". Nowhere else in the bible is such a perfect summation of the unchanging nature of God, shown here through his Son Jesus. In just eight (English) words, the writer tells us that it doesn't matter what changes are going on around us, whether that is civil war or the technological changes we know today, God does not change.

It is the same message our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents heard **and** it is the same message that our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will hear.

Whatever changes we face, whether as individuals, or as wider society and world, change is not new. God's nature does not change, the message that he gave us through the bible does not change,

All God asks us to do is the same as that he asked our ancestors to do and will ask future generations to do.

He asks us to put him first in our lives, to prioritise him with all the competing demands society makes on us.

He asked our ancestors to put him first and some of them will have done, and others will not have done, it was their choice, just as it is our choice.

He will also give the future generations the same choice. To choose him, to put him first in their lives and let him work his purpose out as he shows his love for every single person, past; present and future.

Part of putting God in our lives is to worship Him. Today we are here to worship God, to commemorate the last supper in holy communion, and yet throughout history people have done just the same. For almost eight centuries, people have come to this very site to worship the same God, how they have worshipped God has changed (we are not having this service in Latin for example!) Aspects of the communion have changed with the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer from the first version in the sixteenth century to the one we use today but at the heart of the simple action of taking bread and taking wine and giving thanks to God for the fact that he loves us so much that he sent his Son to die for us upon the cross so that we may have eternal life.

The same actions and the same message from an unchanging God. A God who is steadfast in a changing world.

The Scottish Victorian hymn writer Henry Lyte reflected on the unchanging nature of God in these two lines.

Change and decay in all around I see:
O thou who changest not, abide with me.

Amen