



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Eucharist with Prayer for Healing
19th August 2020

Ezekiel 34:1-11, Psalm 23, Matthew 20:1-16

There's been quite a bit in the news recently about recent and upcoming elections. The Presidential race has begun in the USA; a very new kind of process. Gone are the huge arenas with fluttering flags, pumping rock music and tickertape.

And alarming things have been happening in Belarus. Allegations of poll rigging, fraud, brutality towards protesters following a disputed election. The President is quoted as saying 'until you kill me, there will be no other election'.

Political power is so attractive, and can be used for such good, but can be so deadly when it is abused and manipulated by those who use it for their own gain.

The writer, Rollo May, describes five types of power:

Exploitative power which dominates by force or coercion;

Manipulative power which controls by more subtle and covert psychological means;

Competitive power which is ambiguous since it can be used constructively where parties are relatively equal but it is destructive where they are unequal;

Nutritive power which sustains and empowers

Integrative power which takes the freedom of others seriously and seeks to harness the other persons's strengths.

I expect we can think of people in all walks of life, from family, church, work or school who have used these different forms of power, whether for good or ill.

I expect we can think about ways we ourselves have used these different forms of power.

In our first reading, the prophet Ezekiel condemned the shepherds of Israel, shepherds being a common metaphor for kings or political leaders.

They were exercising bad leadership, making policy decisions that were self seeking, and placed the people they should be caring for in peril.

The power they exercised was not the kind of power that led to the flourishing of the people but was neglectful to the vulnerable in society. God promised to take away their power; God himself will come to be the shepherd of his people.

And we see this in today's psalm and gospel. The Lord is a shepherd who takes his sheep to green pastures, protects them, and anoints them with oil. The Lord is like the generous landowner who chooses to be radically generous to everybody, because at the end of the day, each labourer needed to go home and feed their family however long they had worked.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Good shepherd, used his power to care for his disciples, to have compassion on the crowd, to teach them, to heal the sick and to bring salvation to the deserving and the undeserving.

Nutritive and Integrative power if ever we saw it.

Very different to the way power is exercised in so many parts of the world today.

It was once said, unkindly, but truthfully that all political careers end in failure. Particularly true for those in power who don't perceive when it is time to step down.

But time marches on and change is inevitable. As St Paul put it in 1 Corinthians 10:12 'If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall'

Or as Bob Dylan put it

Come senators, congressmen Please heed the call
Don't stand in the doorway Don't block up the hall
There's a battle outside And it is a ragin'
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls
For the times they are a changin'