

*May I speak in the name of the father, son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Well, if you're sat there, thinking 'those readings made complete sense, I understood everything they were talking about, and I feel spiritually refreshed by them', I will say well done, and have you considered being a bishop?

For the rest of us mortals, perhaps like me, you found them quite tricky to digest.

And, understandably so - Deuteronomy and Revelation are renowned for being dense, complex, and very culturally situated texts.

And, when the lectionary comes along, the system the Church of England uses to allocate readings to services, and it carves up these books of the Bible, and drops them in chunks for us to use, it can get even harder for us to understand.

Because they've been cut up, and cut out of context.

They have, in a word, been interrupted.

The reading from Deuteronomy, where God is laying out his plans and his expectations for Israel, and all that this will mean for them, is interrupted.

The reading from Revelation, when God is addressing the seven churches and telling them what God sees, is interrupted.

And we, generally speaking, as a society, can't stand interruptions. We think it's rude, don't we?

We teach children, 'don't interrupt', as they talk over someone.

If someone interrupts you, you think, 'oh, what you had to say was more important than me, was it?'

It can be really irritating, can't it?

But, I ask you now, are all interruptions bad? Are all interruptions rude, and inconsiderate, and unfeeling?

I would suggest, no.

Because, sometimes when plans get interrupted, it can be a relief as well, can't it?

You're all far more holy than I am, so I don't know if you've ever had the situation when you've got plans with someone, and you're not really looking forward to seeing them, and then they cancel on you, and you think 'oh no... what a shame...'

Perhaps you're on the way to do a job you don't want to do, and someone catches you and needs your attention, and you think 'oh thank goodness'

And, personally speaking, I've just had a huge interruption. Moving here, halfway through my curacy, was certainly not planned. It was unexpected. But I've loved it - this first month has been amazing.

And you, as a church family, have had a considerable interruption with Chris and I moving here, but I hope you've enjoyed this interruption to your church's timeline.

**PTO**

Interruptions, sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes, like our readings tonight, quite hard to understand.

And this is all on a human level. Of course, interruptions happen on a divine level as well - perhaps you've heard that famous phrase of, 'man makes plans, and God laughs'

Perhaps you've seen it in someone's life, or perhaps you've experienced it first hand, where everything seems to be running along, and suddenly it all gets interrupted.

Perhaps it was at a time when everything seemed to be going fine, and everything got upturned, bringing chaos and messiness.

Or, perhaps everything seemed to be going wrong, and the interruption brought grace and light and peace?

Man makes plans, and God laughs.

How willing, can I ask you, are you to the idea of God interrupting what you're up to?

Perhaps you're someone who loves to know what's coming next, you're very organised, you know where you'll be and when, and it makes your teeth itch to think someone will get changed.

Perhaps you're someone who's known for being laidback, you've heard all the jokes about if you're any more laid back you'll be horizontal, and you're more than happy to go with the flow if someone changes course.

Of course, either end of the spectrum brings its own dangers...

**The first** might mean you'll resist God's voice, and what God has in store for you... you might see the burning bush out of the corner of your eye, but you're concentrating so much on where you should be going, that when God invites you to something new you won't even consider it, and you'll lose out on those joys God has in store for you.

**The second** is also precarious. If you're happy to listen to all of the voices around you, how do you stop yourself from listening to the false prophets too? If you're happy to chop and change, how do you know you're not following temptation, rather than God?

So what do we do? I'm afraid my answer is not particularly exciting, nor revolutionary, but it is simple - pray.

Pray that you might be able to hear God's voice above the rest, calling you to follow him, pray for the willingness and wisdom to follow the holy interruption when your plan seems so much more tempting. Not just that, but to keep praying when it feels like the holy interruption has led to choppy waters, to chaos and messiness and what feels like a dead end.

To follow the holy interruptions, to stick with them, is to risk being in the chaos, in the messiness, in the desert, and to think, 'well now what?'

But, to borrow a quote from Orson Welles: '***In Italy for thirty years... they had warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed, but they produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance.***

***In Switzerland, they had...five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did that produce? The cuckoo clock.***

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not hoping for warfare, terror, murder, and bloodshed in our benefice. But, if we are willing to step into the unknown, to have our plans divinely interrupted, to be led out into the desert every now and then, to sit with readings and experiences that can be tricky to understand, who knows what we might produce.

Amen.