**Acts 13.26-41**

26 ‘My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. 27Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. 28Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30But God raised him from the dead; 31and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. 32And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors 33he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm,
“You are my Son;
   today I have begotten you.”
34As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,
“I will give you the holy promises made to David.”
35Therefore he has also said in another psalm,
“You will not let your Holy One experience corruption.”
36For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; 37but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption. 38Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; 39by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:
41 “Look, you scoffers!
   Be amazed and perish,
for in your days I am doing a work,
   a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you.” ’

**In praise of an open future**

This story from Acts touches on the Judeo-Christian theme of the misreading of the times and the murder of the prophets.

God sends a messenger to God’s own people. Messenger is misunderstood and murdered.

*Acts 13.27Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him.*

This is the story of the prophets and of Jesus the Christ. We (God’s people) are often charged with not reading the times right. Often, I will suggest because we have misinterpreted past, present and most especially future.

*Matthew 23.37 (Jesus’ Lament over Jerusalem). ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!*

You may have often heard God described as the one who is and who was and who is to come. This comes from the doxology in Revelation 1.4-7 and I think it is deeply comforting because it speaks to the timelessness, or all-timeliness of God.

However in that little nugget we see the stumbling block that often led the people to stone the prophets.

The reason that Christ could minister in a community, heal the sick, and inspire such awe that even the occasionally- flaky crowds would say “ he does everything well” (Mark 7.367)- and yet still be murdered at their behest- speaks to a human fixation on our own knowledge. An arrogance that we can know the future- and what it should look like.

We all know what has been, and least in our lives. And we can read what has happened in the life of God’s people in the scriptures. We also know what is happening in this present moment. But not content with that, we project forward. We imagine we are she or he that was, who are now and who know what is to come.

If we do not know what is to come (e.g. international pandemic arrives, and we do not know what the future will bring) we can panic.

Those who thought they knew what the Christ would be were those same people who could not handle who Jesus the Christ was. His presence created an unbearable panic.

He was too much challenge to survive human need for knowable order.

We are heading out of lockdown.
This is the last of the Friday services in this format (God willing) for a while. Sunday services will still be both online and in person in July, but this service will move to a face-to face mode.

This is scary and a little sad because I have enjoyed this ministry with you.

Granted it is not as worrying as when we were heading into lock down, but there is anxiety in what we do not know.

But here is the thing…

While we can be certain that God was, and indeed we know that God is, and we can rest assured that God is also to come, how that works out is unwritten. This is not a script. You are not playing a part.

While God will be in the future, God is only appreciable in the what has been (as a memory) and much more fully in this present. Of these I think the most we can tell is from the outworking now.

Do not fear the future, because the past has shown how adaptable and resilient you are. What does church look like in ten minutes, ten weeks or ten years, we do not know. We do know that God will be working through it and God will present with you most especially in the now.

Because right now, not in some distant future time, God is bringing about works “that you will never believe, even if someone tells you” (Acts 13.41b).

**The Lord be with You**