

Connecting faith and daily life

Gillian Cooper *reflects on* 2 Samuel 5:1-5. 9-10

Jerusalem

David the shepherd boy has become king of Israel. He has survived giants and armies, hatred and betrayal. He has been clever and resourceful. He is good-looking, talented, popular with the women as well as one of the lads. And he has God on his side.

The first seven and a half years of David's reign seem uneventful – they pass by in a single sentence. All we know is that he was based at Hebron. Hebron was already a significant place in ancient Israel. The book of Genesis tells us it was where Abraham bought a plot of land as a burial place for his wife Sarah. It was the first bit of the land of Israel owned by Israel's ancestor. It is the obvious place for the king to hold court.

But Hebron represents the past, and David's reign is about the future. Ever the effective strategist, David captures the city of Jerusalem from its Canaanite residents, and there he establishes the "City of David". Jerusalem has no historical or religious associations. The people's new capital city is David's place. There his palace will be, and there also God's temple, for ever associated with David and his successors.

So David gives us Jerusalem. Beautiful and doomed. Conquered and rebuilt. Essential to three world religions, and many warring peoples. A place of hatred, tragedy and death. And a place where through David's descendant hatred has been defeated, death has been conquered, and God's love has triumphed. ☺



Statue of King David, Mount Zion, Jerusalem

Journalling

Five a day

by Julia McGuinness

Over the next five weeks, Julia McGuinness considers the impact that keeping a journal can have on our faith life.

Humans have been described as "teflon for positive; velcro for negative". Nine people express appreciation for something we have done – the tenth is critical. Yet that one comment can dominate our thinking. Our spiritual health benefits from a shift of perspective.

Paul encourages the Thessalonian Christians to "give thanks in all circumstances"

(1 Thessalonians 5:18). Writing down our thanksgivings can be a powerful way of praying them. It gives them substance and helps us pay deeper attention to God's goodness amidst life's challenges.

A journal entry need not only be continuous prose. Making a list is an accessible way of writing that helps us get down the essentials quickly. Why not take time each evening to jot down five things you want to thank God for? Your five-a-day for spiritual nutrition. You don't have to be endlessly inventive with different thanksgivings each time. If something continues to bless, continue to give thanks. After all, if someone regularly cooks for you, you've probably thanked them more than once. ☺

We pray, Lord for the peace of Jerusalem, for reconciliation between all those who live there, and all who from a distance call it home. May it be once more a beacon of hope, and a sign of your kingdom on earth. Amen.

Walking with Rosie

Finding the way

by Gillian Cooper

Rosie and I are on holiday. We have walked along the beach, and are heading back to our cottage. Rosie is off the lead, in front of me, heading confidently in the direction of home, and supper. Suddenly she veers off towards the dunes, and up a track. It's not a path we've taken before, but sure enough, it brings us out at the end of our lane. It is smell that enables her

to find her way? Or the strength of her desire for supper?

Some people know exactly what they are called to be and do, and, like Rosie, head for it with confidence and determination. But most of us meander through life, doing this and that, trying to be the best we can be, hoping occasionally to catch a glimpse of the One towards whom we are heading and in whom is the home we will all reach in the end. ☺

“The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down.”

Psalm 146:8