

Lectionary readings: 1 Samuel 8: 4-11, 16-20; Psalm 138; 2 Corinthians 4: 13 – 5: 1; Mark 3: 20-35

For reflection and prayer

- **1 Samuel:** Since Samuel is getting old and his sons are corrupt and therefore not fit to take over from their father, the people demand a king to rule over them. Samuel is dismayed by this but, after prayer, realises the people are not rejecting him, but God. We are often very like those ancient people demanding our own way, regardless of whether it is God's way. It is very important for us to reflect on when our ego is in control and we are acting out of our own selfish, self-seeking desires, or acting out of our deeper self where God dwells and living in accord with that living presence within us.
- **Psalm 138:** Here are a few verses from 'Psalms for Praying' for us to reflect on. *'I was humbled when I came to see that You dwell in me, in the Holy Temple of all souls; my gratitude knows no bounds! For you are the Holy One, the Breath of our breath.'* I wonder how many of us really believe that God lives within each person, that he is the Breath of our breath? How would that make a difference to the way we live and how we treat people? *'All the leaders of the earth shall one day praise You, when Your Word awakens in every heart; and they shall proclaim the new dawn of Light and Love.'* How we long for such a day, for every one of us and our leaders to follow God's way and so light up this dark world.

- **2 Corinthians 4:** The verse that stands out for me in this passage is v16 in The Message: *'Even though on the outside it often looks as though things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.'* This surely speaks of God's indwelling presence filling us with his life and light and love, his grace unfolding in and through us every day. What an amazing truth. May we allow his grace to flow in and through us this week.
- **Mark 3:** Jesus has been healing people on the Sabbath and setting people free from an evil power trying to strangle them. He has been forgiving sins, something the religious authorities considered blasphemy. Jesus was abiding in God rather than abiding by rules. The religious authorities claimed that the good Jesus was doing was actually inspired by an evil power. Jesus called this 'the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit'. Here is what Jane Williams (wife of the former Archbishop of Canterbury) says about the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: *'It is the willingness to confuse God's living, liberating Spirit with the death-dealing, imprisoning spirit of evil. You cannot confuse them by accident. You can only do it if you wilfully reject God and prefer to be bound yourself and see others in chains than accept God's redemption in Christ.'*

A Prayer

Father, we confess that we are all too often prone to go our own way instead of reflecting on what would be in line with your desires for us. May we open ourselves more and more to your unfolding grace so that we walk in step with you. Amen.