Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16; Luke 12:32-40

**May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

I read today’s readings in the knowledge that at 9.45 I will be baptising three children. And between them, those three children have four siblings, three of whom I have also baptised in the short time I have been at South Weald: William’s big brother, Benjamin, and Christian’s brother and sister, Nathan and Emilia.

And I find myself, when I make these subsequent baptism visits to the families, saying old-person things, like: Goodness hasn’t he grown. Or she. Yes of course they have. It would be stranger if they hadn’t. But the passage of time does seem to be faster than it ever used to be …

Don’t blink because, once you do, these children will be crawling, or walking, or starting school, or college, or learning to drive or whatever. Dr Seuss had a verse for it. It goes like this:

How did it get so late so soon,

It's night before it's afternoon.

December is here before it's June.

My goodness how the time has flewn.

How did it get so late so soon?

It really does get so late so soon. So, assuming some of you are at least a bit like me, why do we spend so much of our life doing things that give the impression we have so much time; like we are just rehearsing for the real thing …

Today’s gospel reading is about a state of readiness for life. About going forward into a future hopefully. Jesus has just told his disciples to stop fretting about the details of life: what they were going to wear, or eat. He had reminded them that the birds don’t worry about where their next meal is coming from, because God provides. And that the flowers of the fields don’t worry about whether they are wearing the right thing or looking beautiful; they just are. And that culminates in the bit we heard: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to **give** you the kingdom. We can’t do anything to earn it. All we can do is be ready. Look for the signs of the kingdom. Jump on God’s bandwagon when it appears.

And while I was thinking about children, I was reminded of how they see the world differently from the way we see it. Watch a child playing in a mud-kitchen – absorbed in mixing and stirring; or watching a worm or an insect move. Their attention to the details of life is intense. They notice and are in wonderment at all sorts of things. They have a natural ability to see the world around them as if it were all new and amazing.

It is something that we adults do rarely, but if we do have wow moments, we are most likely to have them when we are away, perhaps on holiday. When we have time. And when we are faced with new sights and sounds in places that are foreign to us.

In fact, when we are strangers and sojourners. I love that word sojourners. It means people who are not normally resident there; people who are passing through.

And we are all, in a sense, just passing through.

We heard about strangers and sojourners – or exiles – or foreigners, depending on the translation you are reading - in the first reading this morning, the one from Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, which was talking about faith. *Faith is the assurance of things hoped-for, the conviction of things unseen.* And it was related to the story of Abraham and his wife. Who set out on a huge journey without knowing where they were going; or how long it would take; but who believed that this was what God was calling them to do. So they went. They had no concrete proof that all would be well, but they believed that God was with them. That’s the conviction of things unseen.

And bear in mind that Abraham was already quite old; and childless; yet according to God, his descendants were going to number as many as the stars he could see in the night sky above Hebron.

When did you last look up at the stars in a night sky and really get lost in them? It’s a bit difficult this close to the city, but when did you last really notice the sheer scale of the universe? And once you start, you realise that there are even more stars than you thought when you first looked up.

How many are there? How far off are they? How did they get there? And what does our earth look like from where they are? Think of the vastness of Creation. And the minuteness of us in the scale of things. There is so much uncertainty in this world of ours. Political uncertainty. Environmental uncertainty. What are we heading towards? Where will we be in even twenty years’ time? Or fifty?

But then remember that the stars Jesus saw when he looked up are the same stars we see when we look up. And the Father Jesus turned to in moments of fear and uncertainty is the same Father we turn to.

When I talk to parents and godparents about baptism, it might be trite but it is also true that this whole life is a journey. And baptism is the beginning of a journey of faith, of learning and of growth towards God. And it is never too late to be baptised, those of you who are not.

Indeed, it is an act of faith to look at life as a journey from start to finish, and not just as a sort of end-game. And so we come back once more to Jesus’ words: do not be afraid little flock.

Abraham set out on his journey with no concept of how many years it would take him to get to where God wanted him to go. No idea of what would befall him on the way; for good or ill. Of the difficulties he would overcome. But it was quite simple for him. God is calling me to do this, and God will see me through. He couldn’t plan for what he might need; he just had to go in trust.

How can we be ready in the way that Jesus was exhorting the disciples to be ready? I guess by understanding the priorities. By sitting lightly to possessions; by trusting that there will be enough, and knowing that more than enough is neither necessary nor important. We are called to live fearlessly in a world that is full of fears and uncertainties. And we do that by faith.

We are indeed foreigners, strangers, sojourners in a strange land. And we can’t take it all with us, just as Abraham couldn’t carry stuff for every possible eventuality with him.

God is totally, utterly and completely reliable. Faith begins with God. And leads to a response in us. All **we** need is just enough faith for us to respond. What’s important is not how much faith we have. But how we act on whatever faith we do have. How we respond to what we know of God.

And I am reminded that, even when we think we don’t believe in God, it’s OK. Because God believes in us.

Do not be afraid, little flock.

**Amen**