

LIFEPATH 2025

AT BRINKBURN PRIORY

REFLECTION 2

Theme: The Servant King

I love the Northumbrian hills, their majesty and splendour and also the history that has been captured by the landscape some of which is still very evident today. For instance this place which is called Spylaw, sits on the southside of the Simonside Hills right on St Oswald's Way. From here I'm looking towards Fontburn reservoir and beyond that down to Hadrian's Wall. This cottage used to be home to a shepherd and his family and is now run by Blyth Valley Scouts and offers simple accommodation for overnight stays, I've stayed here a few times myself.

In the grand scheme of things this building really isn't that old. There's evidence in these hills that folk have lived up here for millennia, the Iron age Hillfort is at least 2000 years old and there is also evidence of Bronze Age activity just over the ridge from here which could date back some 9000 years. So there were probably people living up here when St Oswald was king and he could easily have visited the homes of folk in this area.

But why should I suggest that, kings don't normally do house calls? Here we are well off the beaten track, in the middle of nowhere, it does seem odd to think that Oswald would be spending his time with peasant farmers. Yet that is part of what marked him out as a different sort of king to others who had ruled this land before him.

Bede tells us this of Oswald;

"Oswald gained from the one God who made heaven and earth greater earthly realms than any of his ancestors had possessed; in fact he held under his sway all the peoples of the kingdoms of Britain, divided among the speakers of four different languages... Though he wielded supreme power over the whole land, he was always wonderfully humble, kind and generous to the poor and to strangers."

One of the ways that Oswald expressed this humility was his willingness to travel with Aidan on his missions when he shared the Gospel, got to know the people and learn their language. Oswald act as his translator whilst Aidan learned the dialect of the Northumbrian Angles. Oswald's humility

was well noted and won him a great deal of respect from his people. Does he remind you of another King?

Our scripture reading today is from John's Gosepl, chapter 13 verses 3 – 5 and 12 – 15.

³ Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; ⁴ so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. ⁵ After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.

¹² When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. ¹³ 'You call me

"Teacher" and "Lord", and rightly so, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Silence

Let us pray.

Lord God as we prepare ourselves to be a part of the Lifepath team then help us to lay aside all those things which may encumber us so that we can learn from our master Jesus who was humble in heart and action. May we take inspiration from the life of Oswald who followed in Jesus' footsteps and had a heart that was willing to serve so that others could hear the wonderful and life-giving stories of Your son and our Saviour Jesus.

Amen.