Last week in the Old Testament reading particularly we found a country divided. This week’s shows the country reuniting – by God’s guidance.

Saul continues his paranoia about David and to get the full story we have to go to the previous chapter. To his delight he discovered that David was in Keila. As it had a gate

 which was the only way in and out he had David trapped, however David became aware of his danger and fled to Ziph. Saul pursued him with his 3000 men and David then fled to the Great Rock at Maon. When Saul arrived at Ziph the people told him of David’s hiding place and there was no doubt that if there had not been an intervention Saul would have found David and almost certainly killed him. En route Saul received a message that the Philistines were attacking a part of is kingdom and he decided that they were more dangerous than David. He brought his army to the place, defeated the Philistines and then renewed his search for David, whom he learnt had moved to En Gedi which had caves described as “deep and hollow, of great length and breadth”. I understand that some people actually lived in some of these caves.

It was in the depths of one of these that David and his 400 men were in hiding where Saul needed to answer a call of nature. David, who had vowed never to kill the Lord’s anointed cut off a piece of the king’s robe rather than his head.

I am intrigued how David managed to creep from his hiding place to where the king was, cut off a piece of clothing without Saul hearing, seeing or feeling him. We then learn that when David calls to Saul and Saul turns David prostrated himself, as was the custom to do in the presence of the monarch. Nowadays there are some who refuse to make a small bow or curtsy in the presence of our Queen.

I was reminded of a story the older people of my congregation told me that when they were children at the church school the boys had to bow and the girls curtsy when they met the Vicar!!

Saul appreciated that David had saved his life and acknowledged that he would be king after Saul departed, but he received the promise that David would preserve Saul’s family. David returned to Saul’s service - a country united again.

Was it coincidence that Saul chose that particular cave to relieve himself or was it ordained by God?

Having helped David through a very traumatic period of his life God showed him the way of his future, which David happily followed.

I am sure that I am not alone by looking back on my life, often those times when life appeared at its hardest God has taught me how to overcome and lead me on the path he had chosen for me..

In the second reading Jesus is advising his host (and us) to give without expecting anything in return. Do we do good deeds or make sure others see our giving so that we may receive some “recognition”?

It was heart warming to hear young Marcus Rashford telling how he and his siblings had often gone hungry as their Mother struggled to make ends meet. He asked the government to change policy and restore food vouchers during school holidays. Admitting his family’s circumstances had changed (an international football player receives thousands of Pounds every week) his message was heard and sincerity recognised. He had raised millions to help disadvantaged people during this dreadful period, did not want or expect anything for himself but acted purely for others as he remembered his childhood.

In the next story the invited guests acted dreadfully. I understand that it was practice to send out invitations some weeks in advance and then a second invitation when all was ready. Those people knew the banquet was due, but they offered very flimsy excuses not to attend. The host was furious and ordered that disadvantaged people be brought in their stead.

There is little doubt that Jesus was saying that those Jewish people had known that the Messiah would come at some time but had rejected him when he arrived.

Does that still exist? Have we been guilty of making flimsy excuses for refusing his guidance?

Unfortunately at present we cannot have the Lord’s “banquet” (the Communion service) and when it does come I hope that we will not be missing.