

All Saints Church, Kempston
St James's Church, Biddenham

Virtual Church News

15 August 2021

11th Sunday after Trinity

Welcome to Virtual Church News. Hard copies will be circulated to those without access to email/social media. If you know of anyone without email who you think would benefit from a hard copy, please call Jacqui on 0778 6886 710 or email her at stjameschurchbiddenham@gmail.com

This Week's Services

- Sunday 9.30am: Service at All Saints, Kempston
- Sunday 11.00am: Virtch (Zoom)
- Monday 9.00am: Morning Prayer (Zoom)
- Wednesday 6.00pm: Virtch (Zoom).

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

I can feel the anger of my stepdaughter. She is coming to the end of her masters at Roehampton University on 'International Relations and Human Rights,' and even with me, she attacks every hint or word of Prejudice and discrimination, especially when it relates to gender, race or sexuality. These three things define who we are and she is particularly vocal on how religion of every kind becomes a medium for enslaving human beings. Still, despite her criticism, I tell her that the one thing she must not do is lose her passion and anger because what she speaks of without realising it are Kingdom values.

For the best part, I am on the same page as her, and, as a priest, I grieve that the church cannot extricate itself from the association with some of the colours of human identity and sin. So often we emphasise certain passages of the Bible with our eyes closed to the context in which these were written. We forget how the letters of St Paul (roughly a third of the New Testament), and even the Gospels are coherent arguments from beginning to end and were not written originally with chapter and verse to encourage people to pick and choose the context of their own prejudice, but as single coherent texts. Even Paul, however, recognised that these texts, never written with the intention of being sacred truths, were incomplete and were written in anticipation that one day we understand fully the nature of truth (1 Corinthians 13:11-13).

The Bible has a still small voice that rises above the earthquake, wind and fire of dogmatism, that

Continued on next page...



A Reading for the Week

Mary's Song (Luke Chapter 1)

46 And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

48 for he has been mindful

of my lowliness.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

49 for the Mighty One has done great things for

me—

holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,

from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their

inmost thoughts.

52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones

but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things

but has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,

remembering to be merciful

55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,

just as he promised our ancestors."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

Virtch

Zoom services are normally held at 11am on Sunday, 9am on Monday and 6pm on Wednesday. Simply go to Zoom and enter meeting ID 998 074 6039.

The Love of Christ is not locked down

Virtual
Virtch
Church

St James, Biddenham, All Saints, Kempston

Message from Rev Eric Lomax cont...

...speaks to our hearts, to break down the walls that we build, and ultimately shreds the curtain of exclusivity from the Temple of our Xenophobia (Mark 15:38), and the breath (Ruach) of the Spirit, shatters the language of our arrogance (Genesis 11:1-9), and unites us in a new language of love and openness (Acts 2:1-11). A breeze of equality moves between our divided hills, and what we thought was Godly, turns out to be our own deeply deceptive idols (John 4:21-22). For God's sake, stop following the script and read your Bible properly.

God leads us through scripture to a place of Shalom (wholeness, wellbeing, and unity). We are told that the road to redemption is not through sacrifice (Genesis 22:8, Hebrews 10:12), but by responding to the one thing that God asks from us, to do justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

If we go to Luke's Gospel, throughout Christ's journey, we find this emphasis on justice, healing, and equality. When he stands in the Synagogue, and reads from the Scroll of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus talks about his own emphasis on justice (Luke 4:18). Equally it is in Luke's Gospel that the writer focusses down on the beatitude in Matthew 5:3 (blessed are the poor in Spirit), by declaring the unambiguous 'Blessed are the poor.' (Luke 6:30).

It is in this context that we find, in our reading, the song of Mary. Probably a young girl of approximately 12, who in that culture was eligible for an arranged betrothal to a young man like Joseph. She would have been the lowest of the low, somebody who had no voice, and who was disempowered by patriarchal oppression.

The church has often, shamefully referred to Mary with reference to her virginity, but her sexual status was not relevant to the reason why she was chosen. She was chosen because of her own lowliness. She herself was weak and oppressed, but God chose her because he was the God who liberates those who are in slavery (the book of Exodus).

So this young, oppressed girl proclaims exactly what the Lord's justice is. She tells us that he has scattered the proud, humbled the powerful and has crushed the mighty. He has taken from the rich and given to the poor, turning the values of our culture, our society, and even our religion on its head. In a simple, but beautiful song, which we call the Magnificat, Mary tells us the nature of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ. It is a Kingdom that shows justice to the marginalised, the poor and the oppressed. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

God Bless
Eric

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Let us pray...

Lord it is your will
that all be gathered
as one family in Christ
Fill us with the fire of your love
and a passion for justice,
Guide us with a sense of equality
and so unite our brothers and sisters, in peace.
Amen



Suggested Music for this week

Alleluia, sing to Jesus
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJDWFYIkBns>

Angel-voices ever singing
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nig-VqlyGzA>

How could you say no
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j09R9bbuFYY>

Here, O my Lord, I see thee face to face
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b606AwNX0-8>

Magnificat (Stanford)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7UorDdRg60&t=72s>



Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

If you don't have access to the internet, try tuning in to the following:

Sunday 15 August

- 8.00am Three Counties Radio - weekly service.
- 8.10am BBC Radio 4 - Sunday Worship.
- 1.15pm BBC 1 - Songs of Praise.
- 3.00pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Wednesday 18 August

- 3.30pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Daily Hope Phone Line Still Available

Music, prayers, reflections and full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a free telephone line.

0800 804 8044

Available 24 hours a day.



A free phone line of hymns,
reflections and prayers

All Age Reading

1 Kings 2 v 10-12 and 3 v 3-14

¹⁰Then David died and was buried with his ancestors in Jerusalem. ¹¹He had ruled over Israel 40 years. Seven years were in Hebron, and 33 years were in Jerusalem.

Solomon Takes Control as King

¹²Now Solomon became king after David, his father. And he was in control of his kingdom.

³Solomon showed that he loved the Lord. He did this by following the commands his father David had given him. But Solomon still used the many places of worship to offer sacrifices and to burn incense.

⁴King Solomon went to Gibeon to offer a sacrifice. He went there because it was the most important place of worship. He offered 1,000 burnt offerings on that altar. ⁵While he was at Gibeon, the Lord came to him in a dream during the night. God said, "Ask for anything you want. I will give it to you."

⁶Solomon answered, "You were very kind to your servant, my father David. He obeyed you. He was honest and lived right. And you showed great kindness to him when you allowed his son to be king after him. ⁷Lord my God, you have allowed me to be king in my father's place. But I am like a little child. I do not have the wisdom I need to do what I must do. ⁸I, your servant, am here among your chosen people. There are too many of them to count. ⁹So I ask that you give me wisdom. Then I can rule the people in the right way. Then I will know the difference between right and wrong. Without wisdom, it is impossible to rule this great people of yours."

¹⁰The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked him for this. ¹¹So God said to him, "You did not ask for a long life. And you did not ask for riches for yourself. You did not ask for the death of your enemies. Since you asked for wisdom to make the right decisions, ¹²I will give you what you asked. I will give you wisdom and understanding. Your wisdom will be greater than anyone has had in the past. And there will never be anyone in the future like you. ¹³Also, I will give you what you did not ask for. You will have riches and honor. During your life no other king will be as great as you. ¹⁴I ask you to follow me and obey my laws and commands. Do this as your father David did. If you do, I will also give you a long life."

Bedford Foodbank

Items currently needed: UHT Milk, Cup-a-Soup, Fruit Juice (Longlife), Tinned Carrots/Peas/Sweetcorn, Tinned Tuna, Rice Pudding, Tinned Fruit, Rice 250g/500g/1kg, Ham (Small Tins), Coffee (small), Biscuits, Shampoo, Washing-Up Liquid, Anti-Bac Spray, Deodorant (Unisex), Tin Openers.

Please continue to support this valuable charity and help them prevent hunger in our community.



The All Age Bit

This week we are looking at the story of Solomon asking for Wisdom. Why do you think Solomon asked God for wisdom? Solomon had seen how good a King his father was, David had been a caring King who loved and obeyed God. Solomon wanted to follow in his father's footsteps, but he knew his was young and inexperienced, he knew that wisdom would help him to be the best King possible.

Solomon recognised his own weaknesses and he chose to ask God for something which would help him to serve his people better, not something selfish to make himself rich or happy. This demonstrated Solomon's humility, which is the ability to recognise your own weaknesses and to have a modest view of your own importance and abilities.

Activities

20 Questions - Pick any item in the whole world. Everybody else has 20 questions to ask to try and work out what the object is, but you can only answer 'yes' or 'no' to each of the questions.

Name that object - pick an object in the room. Can you describe it to the rest of the group without actually naming the object?

Song

Wisdom song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgKivhRnCKU>

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the story of Solomon which reminds us that you care for us and give us good gifts. Help us to make wise decisions too and to be good stewards of the gifts you give us, to be humble putting others first. We pray for those in leadership in our schools, churches, workplaces and nation that they would be wise leaders who know and follow you.

Above resources (and more) can be found at Together at Home. www.tath.co.uk.

Prayer/Bible Study Groups

Join our prayer group at 8pm on the 1st/3rd Thursdays of the month via Zoom. Everyone welcome. We also have Bible study groups which are open to everyone.

Contact John Lambert for further details, or with any prayer requests. john.c.lambert@gmail.com

Covid-19 Support Networks

If you need support with shopping, loneliness or anything else at this time please do get in touch!

Biddenham: Ring 01234 815393 (daytime only) or email help@biddenham.org.uk with your name/phone number/address.

Kempston: Contact Rev Eric Lomax (328452) or Alan/Anita Lowe (857212).