

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

Virtual Church News

22 August 2021

12th 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 St James's, Biddenham
- Sunday 11.00am: Virtch (Zoom)
- Monday 9.00am: Morning Prayer (Zoom)
- Wednesday 6.00pm: Virtch (Zoom).

A Reading for the Week

John 6.56-66

⁵⁶Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever. ⁵⁹He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

⁶⁰When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' ⁶¹But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? ⁶²Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

⁶⁶Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him.



Services In our Churches From 1 September

Now that the country is re-opening more fully we will be increasing the number of services so that, in time, there is a service held every week at each church.

We have, however, decided not to go back to the old service structure/timings, but to try something different (with a proposed three month trial period).

From 1 September services will be held each month as follows:

1st Sunday

8.00am Service at All Saints

9.30am All Age Service (followed by said Holy Communion) at St James's

2nd Sunday

9.30am Holy Communion Service at All Saints

6.30pm Service of Evening Prayer at St James's

3rd Sunday

8.00am Service at All Saints

9.30am Holy Communion Service at St James's

4th Sunday

9.30m Holy Communion Service at All Saints

5th Sunday (when there is one)

9.30am Service at St James's

It is hoped that from 1 October we can also hold lay led services at St James's at 9.30am on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month - but this will be confirmed in due course.

We hope you will join us at these services as we explore a mixture of both traditional and new ways of worship.

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

Message from Rev Eric Lomax

I have run off to hide in Suffolk for a few days without telling very many people. This is, I find, better than forewarning people because it avoids the mumbled pre-ambles to every phone call; 'I know you are away, but...' As you can see from this, I am not entirely wasting my time with my camera. I am sitting overlooking a very calm river, with a cup of coffee, in exactly the same place that John Constable painted his very famous picture of Flatford Mill.

I would recommend being still from time to time, because it helps us to focus. It is easy for things to get in the way of God, and I think that even our religion can easily become a false idol. Currently the Church of England seems to be stripping away its common rituals and replacing them with something else. As an institution, it is almost like they are starting to believe that the Kingdom of God should be built on a bedrock of glossy brochures, business advisors, and strategic plans. By doing this maybe we are ending up just replacing one kind of false idol with another.

Having made the decision to go on a kind of retreat, putting aside my crutches, I found myself sitting in a room feeling utterly alone, (it is hard putting aside your idols!) and then, all of a sudden, I recalled those words that I repeat every week at the Eucharistic prayer, 'The Lord is here. His Spirit is with us.' Could it be that we say these words every week without actually meaning them?

In our reading, Jesus is standing in a Synagogue in Capernaum. The guys there were actually not much different from us who populate our current church buildings. It was important for them that the people who attended performed their rituals, cleansed their hands, bowed in silence at just the right moment and listened to the words read from the scrolls of the Torah. God had, in their view, established his carefully constructed rules, which had to be observed to the absolute letter. The only trouble is that God had actually been pushed aside many years earlier and if we, in the 21st Century, obsess too much with our rituals, our meetings, our strategies and our five year plans, we end up taking our eyes completely off him. It is like, in the name of religion or faith (whatever we want to call it), we have constructed our own Tower of Babel. Don't worry, God will not bother smashing it, it will probably fall down by itself.

Still sat looking out over Constable's beautiful scene, and a man in a BMW just parks right in front of my view. Very flash car, but frankly, I would rather look at the sun spreading its comb of light through the clouds and casting a perfect reflection of the mill on the still water. So would the lady with the box of water colour paints who is sitting a few feet away from me. It may be a very nice car, but it has just been placed in the way of everything that is important.

Back in the synagogue, Jesus looks at the sacred space, the scrolls, the pompous looking attendants, and wonders how we have let our power, our money, our structures, but most of all our religion get in the way of God himself. He had articulated this already in John 4 when he said that the mountain you worship on Gerizim (the place where Tehran Samaritans worship), or Jerusalem (the place where the Jews had their Temple) were of little value at all. What mattered to him was the Spirit of God that surrounds us, fills us and unites us. In AD 60 the Romans completely demolished the Jewish Temple believing that if they did this then they would also destroy the Jewish God. Of course they could not destroy God but the truth is that many of the religious people had forgotten that, behind their carefully polished religion, God was even there.

In the Synagogue Jesus shakes his head in frustration. He had been talking about bread all morning, so he continued on the same thread, talking about the manna (bread) that God had given the Israelites in the wilderness; 'Your ancestors ate the bread in the wilderness, and they still died.' The physical bread in the wilderness was nothing special at all, but it was just a sign that, even though they were lost, he still loved them. What ultimately mattered was not the gift but the giver.

We still celebrate our love for one another with the bread of the Eucharist, yet it is ironic that historically so many Christians have slaughtered one another because they could not agree what that means. It is a sign, just a sign, of the love that God is showing us through the power of the cross, the miracle of the empty tomb, and the work of the Spirit of love in our lives and in our relationship.

When you focus on religion and ritual, and that becomes your god, then it is like you have parked a very shiny car in front of what really matters. For God's sake, and for ours, move the car aside, and let the light of his truth shine through the clouds. The Lord is here, his Spirit is with us.

God Bless
Eric

Let us pray...

God of constant mercy,
who sent your Son to save us:
remind us of your goodness,
increase your grace within us,
that our thankfulness may grow,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen



All Age Reading

1 Kings 8

¹Then King Solomon called for all the leaders of Israel to come to him in Jerusalem. He called for the elders, the heads of the tribes and the leaders of the families. He wanted them to bring the Ark of the Covenant with the Lord from the older part of the city.

⁶Then the priests put the Ark of the Covenant with the Lord in its right place. This was inside the Most Holy Place in the Temple. The Ark of the Covenant was put under the wings of the golden creatures.

¹⁰When the priests left the Holy Place, the cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. ¹¹The priests could not continue their work. This was because the Temple was filled with the glory of the Lord.

²²Then Solomon stood facing the Lord's altar. All of the people of Israel were standing behind him. He spread out his hands and looked toward the sky. ²³He said:

"Lord, God of Israel, there is no god like you. There is no god like you in heaven above or on the earth below. You make agreements with your people because you love them. And you keep your agreements with those who truly follow you. ²⁴You have kept the promise you made to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth. And with your great power you have made it come true today. ²⁵Now Lord, God of Israel, keep the other promises you made to your servant David, my father. You said, 'Your sons must be careful to obey me as you have obeyed me. If they do this, there will always be someone from your family ruling Israel.' ²⁶Again, Lord, God of Israel, I ask you. Please continue to keep that promise you made to my father.

²⁷"But, God, can you really live here on the earth? Even the sky and the highest place in heaven cannot contain you. Certainly this house which I have built cannot contain you either. ²⁸But please listen to my prayer and my request. I am your servant, and you are the Lord my God. Hear this prayer I am praying to you today. ²⁹In the past you said, 'I will be worshiped there.' So please watch over this Temple night and day. Hear the prayer I pray to you here. ³⁰Hear my prayers and the prayers of your people Israel. Please hear us when we pray facing this place. Hear us from your home in heaven. And when you hear us, forgive us.

⁴¹⁻⁴²"People who are not Israelites, who come from other lands, will hear about your greatness and power. They will come from far away to pray at this Temple. ⁴³Please hear their prayers from your home in heaven. Please do whatever they ask you. Then people everywhere will know you and respect you, as your people in Israel do. Then everyone will know I built this Temple for worship to you.

The All Age Bit

This week we will be exploring the story of Solomon dedicating the temple. You can find it in your Bible in 1 Kings, chapter 8. The whole of Chapter 8 is quite a long passage so just part of it is reproduced here.

Sometimes we think about God as being far away in heaven. In the story today God was present in the temple as a cloud. In the book of Ephesians, chapter 3 verse 17 we read "I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love." Today God wants to live in our hearts - we are a temple for Him.

Activity

God appeared as a cloud that filled the temple. Why not spend some time cloud watching! What different shapes and pictures can you see in the clouds? Do you know what different cloud types are called? If not, try to look them up. You can then see what different types of clouds are in the sky above you.

Songs

The following songs have lyrics connected to Solomon's words at the dedication of the temple. Can you match the lyrics to the passage in 1 Kings, or work out how they connect with our story?

Worthy of it all

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4otQ2PfwW30>

Forever

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUH_NzfRmbs

Come and make my heart Your home

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nG-A_val7Pg

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the story of your glory filling the temple that Solomon had built. Thank you that you are not far away from us but that we can know and feel you close to us on earth. Thank you that today you choose to make your home in our hearts. Would you help us know and feel your presence today wherever we go. We echo the prayer of Solomon today: "there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth below." Thank you that you love us and that you always keep your promises. Amen.

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

Suggested Music for this week

Be thou my vision

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o2TdlCpow18>

How shall I sing that majesty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOI-YWWpEXk>

I am loved

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=--3eNmc_t1s

Jesus stand among us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mC16hj3RoXo>



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.



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 & old saucepans

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



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Church Services etc. on TV/Radio

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

Sunday 22 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 25 August

- 3.30pm BBC Radio 3 - Choral Evensong.

Daily Hope

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

Tearfund corner

Do you feel overwhelmed with all that's going on in our world? I found these two articles from Tearfund a great help. Do let me know if you do as well.

<https://www.tearfund.org/stories/2021/08/creation-on-the-brink-the-climate-emergency-explained>

<https://www.tearfund.org/campaigns/afghanistan-emergency-appeal>

Thank you

John Lambert

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