

The Bride Valley Service for Sunday 21st June 2020

Some suggested hymns:

Who is there like you (Stuart Townend) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYkce-EhNuQ>

Blessed Assurance (Fanny J Crosby) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE>

Please take a moment of silence before we begin, you may wish to light a candle

Jesus is the light of the world

Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours.

All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord;

they will bring glory to your name.

For you are great and do marvellous deeds; you alone are God.

Psalm 86 verses 8-10

Confession

You made us to be one family, yet we have divided humanity.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You were born a Jew to reconcile all people, yet we have brought disharmony amongst races.

Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

You rejoice in our differences, yet we make them a cause of enmity.

Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love and power

Forgive us and free us from our sins

Heal and strengthen us by his Spirit

And raise us to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Collect

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails; deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 10:24-39 New International Version (NIV)

²⁴ “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father’s care. ^[a] ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² “Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

“a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—³⁶ a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.”^[b]

³⁷ “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. Even the very hairs on your head are numbered.

Reflection by the Reverend Jane Williams

One of the real benefits during lockdown for us has been the advantage of the lovely Rectory garden and the surrounding beauty of the countryside which we live in. We genuinely have been counting the blessings of living in such a beautiful area and in amongst our daily activity we have tried to spend some time outside each day, taking in the air and enjoying dabbling in some vegetable planting, something we’ve not really done before.

We share the garden of course with lots of feathered friends, among them pheasants, pigeons, blackbirds, thrushes and a robin to mention just a few. At night there is an owl, haven’t seen it yet, but I hear it every night. It is very close to my bedroom window, I’m sure it lives nearby, maybe in the derelict tunnel just below. There are also blue tits nesting just above my study window and the fledglings have just started to venture out. I can be quite close to them just inside the window without them noticing if I stay still enough. It is fascinating to watch. And of course, there are sparrows everywhere, plenty of them, cautiously teetering up the paths, picking at grubs, sometimes getting quite cheekily close, especially to where I’m gradually digging back in some of the undergrowth, exploring.

Jesus was very aware of the abundant supply of sparrows: “**Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?**” If we look across at this story in Luke’s gospel we notice that Luke has five sparrows and Matthew has two sparrows. Matthew has two sparrows being sold for one penny and Luke has five sparrows sold for two pennies. We can easily imagine sparrows being sold for nearly nothing in the local village market.

Jesus goes on to point out: “**Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of our Father.**” Does this mean that everything that happens to a sparrow is the will of God? Does this therefore mean that everything that happens to us human beings is the divine will of God and that we humans are part of a specific and detailed godly blueprint of our lives? Does this mean that God has a specific, detailed plan for our lives (God’s will) and this plan is being carried out in every detail? Who we marry? Where we live? The car we buy? Who we meet today?

It seems to me that this passage is saying something more limited. That is, we are part of God’s glorious will for our lives, but that does not mean that God controls all the specific details of our lives as if we were some puppets who are predetermined to live out a specific, divine plan. Like good parents, God has a grand vision for the life of his children to live in love, kindness, justice, mercy and peace within an extremely evil world. Healthy parents have good and grand visions for their children but do not have detailed blue prints of their children’s lives.

Remember that today is Father's Day. God our heavenly Father is near to us and realises all the little details of our lives, even when we are hurt and fall down to the ground. Even when we are struggling to cope with external factors which we seem to have no control over. Even when we are afraid and uncertain of the future.

And if we let scripture interpret scripture we will see that In Luke's parallel story, he says "no sparrow is forgotten before God." Luke's version of the story illuminates Matthew's version for us; God does not forget one of the sparrows and God does not forget my life or your life either, since we are even more valuable than the sparrows. Luke's emphasis is that God does not forget us as individual human beings. That's how valuable we are to God.

We see all of those pictures of sparrows and remember how God knows and loves and keeps track of every single one of them. And he knows and loves and sees everything about you too. **Amen.**

Let us declare our faith in God

We believe in God the Father,
From whom every family
In heaven and on earth is named.

We believe in God the Son,
Who lives in our hearts through faith,
And fills us with his love.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
Who strengthens us
With power from on high.

We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession, prepared for us this week by LLM Mike Read

Let us pray

We pray for the life of your Church, particularly in these days when we are unable to use our places of worship, but we give you thanks that we have the freedom to pray and worship whatever our situation.

Strengthen our Bishops and Clergy and especially we pray for our Rector Jane. Give her courage and guidance, and help us to give her the support and encouragement that she needs.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for your world, broken by war and famine, and at the present time by the coronavirus. Give wisdom to all in authority especially in making decisions regarding the present crisis. Help us not to forget those who are persecuted for their faith (or no faith at all), and those who are refugees seeking a place of safety in which to live.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the well-being of our community in the Bride Valley. For our schools, those who teach and those who learn. We give you thanks that they have remained open teaching those who have been allowed to remain, and supporting those who have been confined to their homes. We thank you that you have protected those already in school and those who are returning.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for our families and friends especially those who are separated from us by lockdown. Help us to endure the pain of that separation, to be patient knowing that in your good time it will end.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for those in special need. Those who are ill in hospital, nursing home or their own home and for those who care for them. We pray for those who are lonely or depressed ... and for those who are suffering from the loss of a loved one ...

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer.

Look with mercy and love on us, gathered as your people on this Sunday. We each have a part to play in the body of Christ. Help us to grasp the great truth that the world is shot through with your presence, that nothing is foreign to you, that you are always there before us. And in that confidence we offer you again all that we have, all that we are and all that we should be, as agents of your love this week. **Amen.**

Let us pray that we may know life and hope in Jesus Christ as we say:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done;
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
But deliver us from evil
For thine is the kingdom,
The power and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.**

To him who is able to keep us from falling and to present us without blemish
Before the presence of his glory with rejoicing,
To the only God, our saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Be glory, majesty, dominion and authority,
Before all time and now and forever. **Amen.**

Final Prayer

May God who clothes the lilies and feeds the birds of the sky,
Who leads the lambs to pasture and the birds to water,
Who multiplied loaves and fishes and changed water into wine,
Lead us, feed us, multiply us and change us to reflect the glory of our Creator
Now and throughout all eternity. **Amen**