

THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:
Telephone Service for Sunday 10 October 2021 – Trinity 19

The service for today has been prepared by Liz Howlett, and can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this service for the Bride Valley churches. It is good to know that we are joining together in worship this morning in homes around the valley. Although separated physically, yet we are united through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Psalm 90: 14

Satisfy us with your loving-kindness in the morning, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Hymn: All creatures of our God and king

1 All creatures of our God and King
lift up your voice and with us sing
Alleluia, alleluia.
Thou burning sun with golden beam,
thou silver moon with softer gleam,
*O praise him, O praise him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.*

2 Thou rushing wind that art so strong,
ye clouds that sail in heaven along,
O praise him, alleluia.
Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,
ye lights of evening, find a voice;
O praise him ...

3 Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
make music for thy Lord to hear,
Alleluia, alleluia.
Thou fire so masterful and bright,
that givest hearts both warmth and light:
O praise him ...

4 Dear mother earth, who day by day
unfoldest blessings on our way,
O praise him, alleluia.
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,
let them his glory also show:
O praise him ...

5 Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship him in humbleness;
O praise him, alleluia.
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, Three in One;
O praise him ...

William Henry Draper (1855-1933) based on Laudato sii, O me signore St Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun (Public Domain)

Invitation to Confession

We come together to receive the forgiveness of a new day.
We come together to rejoice in the freedom to begin again.
We come together to receive mercy from our heavenly Father.

Prayers of Penitence

You raise the dead to life in the Spirit.
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided.
Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart.
Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Absolution

May the God of love bring *us* back to himself, forgive *us* our sins, and assure *us* of his eternal love in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Collect

Faithful Lord, whose steadfast love never ceases and whose mercies never come to an end: grant us the grace to trust you and to receive the gifts of your love, new every morning, in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Amos 5: 6 – 7, 10 – 15

Seek the LORD and live,
 or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire,
 and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.
 Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood,
 and bring righteousness to the ground!
 They hate the one who reproves in the gate,
 and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.
 Therefore because you trample on the poor
 and take from them levies of grain,
 you have built houses of hewn stone,
 but you shall not live in them;
 you have planted pleasant vineyards,
 but you shall not drink their wine.
 For I know how many are your transgressions,
 and how great are your sins—
 you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,
 and push aside the needy in the gate.
 Therefore the prudent will keep silent in
 such a time; for it is an evil time.
 Seek good and not evil,
 that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts,
 will be with you,
 just as you have said.
 Hate evil and love good,
 and establish justice in the gate;
 it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,
 will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Gospel Reading

Mark 10: 17 - 31

As Jesus was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.
 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another, “Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”
 Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Reflection

Earlier in the week, many millions of people around the world were giving thanks for the life and witness of St Francis. He too was a rich man, like the one who came up to Jesus in today’s gospel reading. Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant in Assisi in Italy, and he worked with his father in the family business until the age of 20. He was well known locally for his enjoyment of parties and celebrations, but his priorities changed after a spell in the army, leading to a year in captivity, followed by a long period of illness. He went on a pilgrimage to Rome and was affected by the number of beggars in the city. Much to the dismay of his father, he resigned from the cloth business and on hearing a passage from the gospels about the disciples being called to leave all behind them to follow Christ, Francis understood this to be speaking directly to him. It was a bold, challenging, life-changing step that he took and he was never completely reconciled to his father. There was the ‘little’ matter of the length of cloth that Francis stole from his father to pay for the rebuilding of the church which he was undertaking. I can also imagine that his father felt it was Francis’ duty to keep the family business going and to provide for the needs of the family and those who were employed by them. Perhaps his father could not accept that there might be different ways of living, different ways of relating to money and possessions. It can be hard to see beyond the usual horizons if someone is very much invested in the values and expectations of the mainstream culture around.
 I wonder what was going through the young man’s mind in our gospel reading in his encounter with Jesus. Mark tells us that he was shocked when Jesus told him the one thing he lacked – ‘sell what you own and give to the poor’. He seems not to have expected this at all – and leaves Jesus’ presence grieving. One commentator suggests that

perhaps the root of this man's struggle with his possessions is revealed when he asks his very first question, 'What must I do to *inherit* eternal life?' Has his spiritual life become merely another commodity for him, which he thinks he can somehow inherit, as he might his family's business interests? Is he assuming there may be a transaction he can undertake that will ensure his life continues in God beyond earthly death?

Whatever lay behind his shock, this rich man could not take the step that Francis did, of walking away from his possessions and living as simply as possible and in close connection with the natural world. Francis is well known for his affinity with birds and animals – for the way they were drawn into his company. The Franciscan friar Richard Rohr says this about Francis, 'Living close to nature as he did, Francis could see Christ in every animal he encountered. He is quoted as talking to or about rabbits, bees, larks, falcons, lambs, pigs, fish... doves and ... a wolf, to name just a few.' This isn't just about talking with the animals – a kind of early Dr Doolittle – this is about an important Franciscan priority, namely 'seeing and trusting the essential unity that underlies all creation, and living out that sense of oneness with God, others, earth and all its creatures.'

I am sure it is no coincidence that it was on Monday 4 October this year, the feast of St Francis, that the pope (also named Francis of course!) and dozens of faith leaders from around the world signed a joint climate appeal in the Vatican, ahead of the UN climate conference – COP26 – which is taking place in Glasgow during the first half of November. The faith leaders, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu leaders had gathered to call on governments all over the world to show genuine commitment to pledges already made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Likewise, the faith leaders have promised to do their part to encourage their people into more sustainable behaviour. As the appeal to governments says, 'We have inherited a garden; we must not leave a desert to our children.' Across the world, there are roughly 10,000 faith bodies and groups that have drawn up a Faith Plan to help focus them in this task. As it happens, both Othona West Dorset and our own diocese of Salisbury are among their number. On our own, Othona is miniscule, even the Church of England is tiny in relation to the whole world – what impact can we have? But here is an opportunity of joining in with our brothers and sisters of many faiths globally. Faith bodies coming together can have a significant impact for good or ill – think of the land, property, money, schools, and hospitals that are held by faith groups worldwide – if they all look seriously and take decisions about how they invest their money for example, how they manage their land sustainably, how children are taught in their schools to value the earth they walk on and what they put into their bodies – what a force for good this could be! This is what these Faith Plans seek to achieve.

The rich man who came to Jesus faced a huge challenge to his way of life and could not take it... St Francis felt called to live as the first disciples had lived, leaving everything behind and as a result challenging his family and community's way of life. Jesus did not call all those who came to him to sell everything they had and give it all to the poor. He did however, speak a great deal about money, and the responsibilities that went with having it. He said 'where your treasure is, there your heart is also.' Perhaps this can be taken as an invitation to wonder where our treasure is; to wonder what is really, really important to us; to consider what legacy we may give to the world, into the future. Amen.

Hymn: Inspired by love and anger

1 Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,
Informed of God's own bias, we ask him once again:
'How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?
How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?'

2 From those forever victims of heartless human greed,
Their cruel plight composes a litany of need:
'Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace?
When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?'

3 God asks, 'Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?'

4 Amused in someone's kitchen, asleep in someone's boat,
Attuned to what the ancients exposed, proclaimed and wrote,
A saviour without safety, a tradesman without tools
Has come to tip the balance with fishermen and fools.

Presence of Divine Love, **open our lives that your peace may flow through.**

Where there is fear let us learn to trust. Where there is apathy let us bring hope. Where there is slander let us speak kindly.

Presence of Divine Love, **open our lives that your peace may flow through.**

Where there is wrongdoing, let us show mercy. Where there is prejudice, let us show welcome. Where there is injustice let us work for freedom.

Presence of Divine Love, **open our lives that your peace may flow through.**

Where there is cynicism let us bring vision. Where there is suffering, let us bring comfort.

O Living One may we seek to be more grateful than to grasp; to love the world more than have the world love us; to follow the call in our hearts more than follow the crowd.

For it is because we are loved that we can love, because we have been forgiven that we can forgive, because we need your blessing more than we can bless. **Open our lives that your peace may flow through, this day and always. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

**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,
And forgive us our trespasses,**

**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**

The Blessing

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with you and guide you on your way at every change and turn; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among *you* and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**

Hymn: Lift up your hearts, we lift them, Lord, to thee

1 'Lift up your hearts!' We lift them, Lord, to thee;
here at thy feet none other may we see:
'Lift up your hearts!' E'en so, with one accord,
we lift them up, we lift them to the Lord.

2 Above the level of the former years,
the mire of sin, the slough of guilty fears,
the mist of doubt, the blight of love's decay,
O Lord of light, lift all our hearts to-day.

3 Above the swamps of subterfuge and shame,
the deeds, the thoughts, that honour may not name,
the halting tongue that dares not tell the whole,
O Lord of truth, lift every Christian soul.

4 Lift every gift that thou thyself hast given:
low lies the best till lifted up to heaven;
low lie the bounding heart, the teeming brain,
till, sent from God, they mount to God again.

5 Then, as the trumpet-call in after years,
'lift up your hearts!' rings pealing in our ears,
still shall those hearts respond with full accord,
'We lift them up, we lift them to the Lord.

*Henry Montagu Butler (1833-1918)
CCLI Licence 2370586*