

THE BRIDE VALLEY CHURCHES:

Telephone Service for Sunday 11 September 2022 – 13th Sunday after Trinity

The service can be accessed by phone on Sunday morning on **01308 293062**.

Welcome to this act of worship for the Bride Valley Benefice. We come together today on the first Sunday since the death of Queen Elizabeth II, remembering a life wholeheartedly dedicated to God and to serving the peoples of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth over 70 years. As we give thanks to God for the late Queen, we pray too for our new monarch, King Charles III, whose accession to the throne was proclaimed in London yesterday. May he govern and serve wisely and with compassion. And we also hold before God our new prime minister, Liz Truss, as she takes up her challenging and demanding role in government. A moment of silence for our own prayers at this time.

The service for today, the 13th Sunday after Trinity, continues with our opening responses.

Opening responses

O God, you summon the day to dawn; you teach the morning to waken the earth.

Great is your name, great is your love.

For you the valleys will sing for joy, the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Great is your name, great is your love.

To you the monarchs of earth shall bow, the poor and the persecuted shall shout for joy:

Great is your name, great is your love.

Your love and justice shall last for ever, fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise.

Great is your name, great is your love.

Hymn: Christ is the one who calls

1 Christ is the one who calls,
the one who loved and came,
to whom by right it falls
to bear the highest Name:
and still today
our hearts are stirred
to hear his word and walk his way.

2 Christ is the one who seeks,
to whom our souls are known.
The word of love he speaks
can wake a heart of stone;
for at that sound
the blind can see,
the slave is free, the lost are found.

3 Christ is the one who died,
forsaken and betrayed;
who, mocked and crucified,
the price of pardon paid.

Our dying Lord,
what grief and loss,
what bitter cross, our souls restored!

4 Christ is the one who rose
in glory from the grave,
to share his life with those
whom once he died to save.
He drew death's sting
and broke its chains,
who lives and reigns, our risen King.

5 Christ is the one who sends,
his story to declare;
who calls his servants friends
and gives them news to share.
His truth proclaim
in all the earth,
his matchless worth and saving Name.

Prayer of Confession and Absolution

In the beauty of the earth, in the silence of our hearts, in the community of your church, in all acts of grace and kindness, in forgiving from the heart and in worship from the soul, your Spirit confirms the truth in which we seek to live.

If knowing this, we have failed to love you, our Maker, been hesitant to follow your Son, and suspected the power of your Spirit, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

If we have desired comfort more than devotion and if we have satisfied our wants more than we have served your will, Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

If we have limited our company to those like us and if we have restricted our conversation to matters of no consequence, Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

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

Almighty God, you search us and know us: may we rely on you in strength and rest on you in weakness, now and in all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Reading

1 Timothy 1: 12 – 17

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example for those who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Gospel Reading

Luke 15: 1 – 10

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Reflection

In this morning’s gospel reading, we are given two of Jesus’ parables – short and to the point, but full of value, because they give us important clues about human nature and about God’s nature – I wonder what these sayings suggest to you about being a human and I wonder what they suggest to you about God.

First, I want to tell you a bit about my little grandson who is just 8 months old. He and his parents have come to stay

for a few days with me recently and I have been reminded of how much is going on for a young one at that stage. He has his first teeth coming through and he is beginning to stand up by himself and he can crawl. And everything he picks up with his fingers goes straight into his mouth. (That last one was a bit of a challenge for me as I don't normally have to bother much about the little bits and pieces that end up on the floor.) And whilst sitting in his highchair having a meal with the rest of us, he is learning about gravity! I have come to realise that babies are actually very like scientists, in that it is not good enough for them to do an experiment just the once. If you drop your spoon and it falls to the ground the first time, you have to do it again and again to see if the same thing happens every time. This is a big part of this 8 months old life at the moment!

Gravity plays an important role in Jesus' parable we heard earlier about the woman and her lost coin. We could imagine that she wears her coins as a kind of headdress, with holes bored in the coins so she can thread them together and keep them safe on her head. Except that one of them has somehow fallen off. The woman knows where to start looking – pointless to search on the ceiling, as things that fall always go down, they always obey the laws of gravity. This parable is saying something really important to us about human nature – we are all going to find ourselves on the floor, for none of us is perfect. And when we do find ourselves on the floor, there is no way we can lift ourselves up and re-join our fellow coins back on the headdress. We cannot do that by our own efforts. None of us is able to make ourselves perfect by our own efforts. There is a similar message too in the parable about the sheep. What do sheep do? Basically, sheep get themselves lost – they can't help it, it is what they do. They wander off, they find places they can get into and then can't get themselves out of. They end up on their backs, wedged into tight places and they are stuck. There is no way they can extricate themselves, dust themselves down and find their way back to the flock. That will never happen. Again, a powerful message for us – we are creatures that get lost – and we need help to be found.

Just to be clear – this is not saying that it doesn't matter what we do – that we need not take any responsibility for our actions. It is not saying that we can just mistreat others or ourselves 'because we can't help it'. That is not it at all. What lies at the heart of these important parables is the type of relationship we humans can have with God. Is Jesus saying something like this? 'If you can accept that you are like a coin that falls to the floor and will stay there until found ... if you can acknowledge your sheep-like nature – that when you get wedged into a gap, you just can't get yourself free and that you need help – then you are opening yourself to God and all the good that God longs to give you and work through you in the world.' There is a sense that in the end, it is the 99 righteous ones who lose out. As if those who say – 'well we are not lost, we have made it all by ourselves, and we need no help from anyone, thank you very much' – are further from God than the ones who accept that they need God's help. The 99 are denying something fundamental about their humanity and until they stop doing that, they are keeping God at bay.

These parables say something really important therefore about humans – and also about God. We are likely to be very familiar with the image of God as shepherd – Jesus talks quite a bit about being the Good Shepherd in the gospels. The image of God as the woman searching for her coin is less familiar perhaps but is equally powerful. What does the woman do? She takes the initiative to find her valuable item that has been lost. She knows the coin cannot retrieve itself without her help. She does not stop searching until she finds her coin... and when she does, what a celebration she has! – sharing her good fortune with all her neighbours.

It can be so hard sometimes admitting that we need God's help, accepting that we can't make ourselves perfect by our own efforts, but in these parables, Jesus is encouraging us to do just that – to let go and to let God. Amen.

Hymn: Dear Lord and Father of mankind

1 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re-clothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

2 In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

3 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

4 Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm.

John Greenleaf Whittier (1807-1892) Public Domain

Jesus said: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.'
Saviour, we hear your call. **Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Unless you change and become humble like little children, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.' Saviour, we hear your call. **Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Be merciful as your Father is merciful; love your enemies and do good to them.' Saviour, we hear your call. **Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Love one another, as I love you; there is no greater love than this, to lay down your life for your friends.' Saviour, we hear your call. **Help us to follow.**

Jesus said: 'Go to people everywhere and make them my disciples, and I will be with you always, to the end of time.' Saviour, we hear your call. **Help us to follow.**

God of mercy, **you know us and love us and hear our prayer: keep us in the fellowship of Jesus Christ our Saviour. 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**

Closing Responses

From where we are, to where you need us,
Jesus, now lead on.

From the familiarity of what we know to the wonder of what you will reveal,
Jesus, now lead on.

To transform the fabric of this world until it resembles the shape of your kingdom,
Jesus, now lead on.

Because good things have been prepared for those who love God,
Jesus, now lead on.

As I mentioned at the start of the service, the accession of King Charles III to the throne was proclaimed yesterday and so we conclude this act of worship with the National Anthem:

*God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King!*

*Not in this land alone,
But be God's mercies known,
From shore to shore!
Lord make the nations see,
That men should brothers be,
And form one family,
The wide world o'er.*