

The Bride Valley Telephone Service for Sunday 30th October

Prepared by the Reverend Jane Williams with a sermon by the Reverend Karen Hutchinson, the Diocesan Lay Ministry Development Officer and available on **01308 293062**

Opening Words:

Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people. Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be glad in their King. Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp. For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with victory. Let his faithful people rejoice in this honour and sing for joy on their beds. (*Psalm 149 verses 1-5*)

Hymn: For all the saints

1 For all the saints who from their labours rest,
who thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy name, O Jesu, be for ever blest:
Alleluia, alleluia!

4 But lo, there breaks a yet more glorious day:
the saints triumphant rise in bright array;
the King of Glory passes on his way!
Alleluia, alleluia!

2 Thou wast their rock, their fortress and their might;
thou, Lord, their captain in the well-fought fight;
thou in the darkness still their one true light:
Alleluia, alleluia!

5 From earth's wide bounds,
from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son and Holy Ghost:
Alleluia, alleluia!

3 O blest communion, fellowship divine.
we feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one in thee, for all are thine:
Alleluia, alleluia!

William W How (1823-1897) CCLI licence 2370586

Invitation to confession

Jesus says, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' So let us turn away from sin and turn to the Lord, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

Prayers of penitence

Father eternal, giver of light and grace, we have sinned against you and against our neighbour, in what we have thought, in what we have said and done, through ignorance, through weakness, through our own deliberate fault. We have wounded your love and marred your image in us. We are sorry and ashamed, and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who died for us, forgive us all that is past; and lead us out from darkness to walk as children of light. Amen.

Absolution

The almighty and merciful Lord grant you pardon and forgiveness of all your sins, time for amendment of life, and the grace and strength of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Collect: Let us pray,

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: grant us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living that we may come to those inexpressible joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 35 1-9

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour

of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God.

Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.'

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs. In the haunts where jackals once lay, grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness; it will be for those who walk on that Way. The unclean will not journey on it; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor any ravenous beast; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there,

1 Corinthians 12. 12-21

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

Luke 6 20-31

Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Sermon by the Reverend Karen Hutchinson

Thank you for your welcome here today; it's such a joy to join you in this beautiful part of the world that I am still getting to know. I've been in post in Salisbury diocese for almost seven months now, and I'm so enjoying meeting different congregations and seeing the many wonderful places we have here.

My role as lay ministry development officer is about the development, coordination and review of all our lay ministries to enable the whole church to share in the mission of God in the world. So it's a pretty broad remit, because lay ministry actually covers every member of the church. Ministry is ours to share, and although not everyone may have a badge or a title, we each have a part to play as Christians, as members of the Body of Christ.

I was asked recently which scriptural models I draw on in my role, and my top pick was Paul's picture of the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, which we heard today. Faced with a disparate bunch of new Christians, some of whom seem to have been rather full of themselves, he gave them a detailed lesson in collaborative ministry. Look at the human body, he said. If every part was an ear, that would be a bit useless. But if an ear thought it should be an eye instead – then how would the person hear anything? And the foot is not less worthy because it isn't a hand – it is a foot and has an important job to do.

And so it is with a variety of ministries. Every Christian has their role to play in the body of Christ, otherwise it doesn't function properly. Sometimes that's a very visible role and needs quite a bit of training to resource it. Sometimes it is less visible, but no less essential. All are valuable. All are offerings to God in response to God's

generous gift of life in his beloved Son. To be fruitful they have to respect each other, work together and communicate, and the best parish teams do just that.

This passage inspires me because it is so anti-hierarchical. Paul stresses that each part of the body has a function – and that no one part is ‘better’ or more important than another. That’s such a helpful corrective to the human tendency to strive for power, then to arrange society in such a way that those with the power get to keep it. The church is not immune from that tendency, sadly, and so many people tend to think of there being a sort of ladder, with the laity at bottom, going up through the priests to the bishops and eventually the archbishops. But when we go back to Scripture, we find a much more egalitarian, collaborative picture. Yes, Paul said often, of course there are apostles and teachers in the church. But there are also administrators, and those who help others – and the church needs each of them in order to work together to be the Body of Christ.

We can’t push any analogy too far, of course, and the danger with that image is it might suggest once a foot always a foot – people can only be one thing. That’s not true of course, because one of the exciting aspects of Christian ministry is that people change and develop, and as you enable them, so you see them grow and flourish, and become capable of new ministries. A body grows and changes over time, and so does the Body of Christ.

And Christ is desperately needed in our world, right here, right now. I think we are all bracing for this winter as a difficult time. War in Ukraine, issues with energy, cost of living, and a struggling economy. You’ve probably all come across people who already are struggling to afford food and bills. Like you, the first hearers of the teaching we heard from St Luke’s Gospel today would have been full of concern and anxiety, longing for a better, more secure future. Crowds had gathered round Jesus, hoping for encouraging words that would promise an immediate improvement in their lives. Perhaps some even thought that this miracle worker could magic up some gold, food, or clothes. What did they get instead? “Blessed are you who are poor” – how much help is that? Jesus was not about to turn stones into bread, nor was he going to overthrow the Romans and reduce the tax burden.

But if they listened carefully, they would have heard Jesus combining the material ‘here and now’ practical advice with an assurance of the spiritual reality of kingdom of heaven. Give your shirt to the man who steals your coat. Love your enemies. Treat them as you would want to be treated. Because the kingdom of heaven is within you – and can make all the difference.

Each time a Christian chooses to respond in love and generosity instead of hatred and meanness, that is one more sign of the kingdom of heaven. One more little piece of heaven on earth. And the more of God’s kingdom that there is here on earth, the more blessed we all are.

The people of God are each equipped with different gifts and opportunities, in different places during the week. So although it is lovely to come together, to worship God together and encourage each other, we don’t want to keep that kingdom blessing shut up in one place, but to share it out and about, wherever we are. So our ministry is not just about what we do within and around the church buildings or activities, but what we do, what we are as Christians seven days a week. The task of the church, the task of the licensed and trained ministers particularly, is to resource the people of God to be the church out in the world, living for Christ seven days a week.

In addition to that essential ministry that comes from our baptism as a Christian, the church also offers particular training and supervision to some specific ministries that need some oversight, some particular care. So we have lay pastoral assistants and lay worship leaders who are locally trained at the encouragement of their local church, and supported through commissioning by the bishop. We also have licensed lay ministers such as Mike, who is marking his retirement as an LLM today and for whom we are deeply grateful; and they have a more extensive training to enable them to preach and lead to a high standard. I can tell you more about any of those ministries if you wish – and if you are interested, please sign up for one of the Zoom events that I’m running with the Vocations team this week.

Those people have particular titles for particular roles, but it doesn’t make any one of them better than someone who might describe themselves as ‘I’m just a ...’ In the kingdom of God there is no ‘just a...’ Each of us is precious to God. Each member of the Body of Christ has the capacity to bear fruit – and the responsibility to do so. For one person it may be the fruit of preaching – for another it may be coming alongside, welcoming, visiting, caring, organising stuff. We are all saints in the kingdom of God, so let’s live in the glorious light of Christ, and share that light and love each day.

Affirmation: *Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.*

Though he was divine, he did not cling to equality with God, but made himself nothing. Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness. He humbled himself and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God has raised him on high, and has given him the name above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Gracious God, fountain of all wisdom, we pray for all Christian people; for Bishops Stephen, Andrew, and Karen, for all Christian leaders, and for those who teach and keep the faith. May the word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts and knit us together in the bond of your love. Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for the leaders of the nations, thinking especially this week of Rushi Sunak, and all those in authority under them. Give them the gift of your wisdom, and a right discernment in all things.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for all who live in the Bride Valley and those who visit us. Speak your word of peace in our midst. Help us to serve one another as Christ has served us.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for those who do not believe and yet who long to know you, the very word of life. Open their ears to hear your voice and open their hearts to the knowledge of your love in Christ.

Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

We pray for those bowed down with grief, fear or sickness, may your living word bring comfort and healing to all those in need. Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

We give thanks for all those who have died in the faith of Christ, and we rejoice with all your saints, trusting in the promise of your word fulfilled. Lord hear us, **Lord graciously hear us.**

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may ever be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today your daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn: All heaven declares

1 All heaven declares
the glory of the risen Lord.
Who can compare
with the beauty of the Lord?
Forever He will be
the Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
and worship Him alone.

2 I will proclaim
the glory of the risen Lord,
who once was slain
to reconcile the world to God.
Forever You will be
the Lamb upon the throne.
I gladly bow the knee
and worship You alone.

Noel and Tricia Richards © 1987 Thankyou Music/Adm. by worshiptogether.com songs www.kingswayworship.co.uk
Used by permission. CCLI Licence 2370586

Let us bless the Lord: **Thanks be to God.**

Blessing, honour and glory be yours, here and everywhere, now and forever. Amen.

Be at peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ Amen.**

Source: This service has been prepared using New Patterns for Worship.
Compilation Copyright ©The Archbishop's Council 2002