

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

11th October 2020: Harvest Thanksgiving

Hazel writes:

In Chapter 20 of the book of Acts, we hear Paul telling the Ephesians that it's always better to give than to receive (v35). Messy Church this week was all about how the Widow of Zapheth benefitted from giving some of her last bread to Elijah, rather than focussing on herself and her son's difficult situation. I pray that you too will benefit from sharing with others, through making harvest donations this weekend, and through the next few months. Times are likely to get more difficult for some people as we head into winter and the virus is still spreading.

On Wednesday 14th October, **Midweek Communion** will be at St. Francis at 10.45am. Next Sunday, 18th October there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St. Mary's at 8am and at 10am in St. Francis. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am.

Our **Harvest Service** is this Sunday 11th October at 10am in St Mary's Church and there will also be a harvest theme at the 8am service in St Francis' Church. We will be collecting donations of non-perishable foods and toiletries for the Bromley Food Bank who are joining us for the Harvest Supper on the previous evening. All monetary donations at these services will also go to the Foodbank. Please come along, or watch on-line, to give thanks for all we have and bring some donations for those who have less.

As well as at these services, **Foodbank donations** can be left in boxes located outside the Vicarage at St Mary's and outside the main door at St Francis' Church at any time. Details of items currently most needed are listed below. Monetary donations can be made through the following JustGiving page:

<https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/bromleyfoodbank>.

Currently the **Bromley Food Bank** need cold meat, custard, small bottles of squash, jelly, instant whip, long life fruit juice, sponge puddings, sweets, washing detergent (non-bio), shaving gel & razors, children's toothpaste & toothbrushes and Christmas food dated 2021 onwards. Currently there are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice, cereals, tea, toilet rolls and tomatoes and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – All files have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are

not on-line. Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – Bishop of Llandaff, Rt. Rev. June Osbourne from Ewenny Priory.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Wellington Cathedral of St. Paul New Zealand.
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10.30 a.m. and Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. from the grounds of Styal Women's prison with Claire McCollum.

Each week our “**coffee/tea & chat**” on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wednesday 14th October at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room at Emmanuel Church, The Grove.

Joe Gilbert's funeral will take place at St. Marys at 1.30 p.m. on Friday 16th October. Due to Covid restrictions members of the congregation will not be able to attend but if anyone wishes to pay their respects they could go to the church before or after the service.

Margaret Norton will be celebrating her 90th birthday this coming week and we send her our love and best wishes on this special occasion.

Continuing our theme of thankfulness this week, **Barbara and Ken Colpus** celebrated their 65th Wedding Anniversary recently and give thanks to God for all his love and his mercies over that time. They say that the years have flown by - God's love is clearly there in their relationship.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.

Collect

Eternal God, you crown the year with your goodness and you give us the fruits of the earth in their season: grant that we may use them to your glory, for the relief of those in need and for our own well-being; through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord.

First Reading:

1 Chronicles 29:10-14

Blessed are you, God of Israel, for ever and ever, for yours is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty. Everything in heaven and on earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head over all. Riches and honour come from you and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; yours it is to give power and strength to all. And now we give you thanks, our God, and praise your glorious name.

For all things come from you,
and of your own have we given you.

Gospel Reading:

Matthew 6: 19-21 & 25-33

Jesus said 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

'Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the

field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well

Post Communion Prayer

Lord of the harvest, with joy we have offered thanksgiving for your love in creation and have shared in the bread and the wine of the kingdom: by your grace plant within us a reverence for all that you give us and make us generous and wise stewards of the good things we enjoy.

TALK:

Don't Worry – Be Settled!

Matthew 6: 19-21 and 25-33

When we think about our reading this morning it seems clear that Jesus' teaching about worrying is rather wide of the mark – “This is not the reality – everybody worries about something,” and yet, Jesus is telling us not to worry. Anyone hearing this scripture for the first time might well be excused for thinking that Jesus is describing some utopian paradise in a parallel universe that's part of a galaxy far, far away that not even the Starship Enterprise could reach on warp speed.

If you are concerned that you'll have still have a job in the next few weeks (and hundreds of thousands of people have been made redundant as a result of Covid19 crisis) – then you are bound to worry. If you are awaiting test results for a health issue or your tests or treatment has been delayed – then you are bound to worry. If you are caring for someone you love who is gradually losing their memory and Covid restrictions mean you can't visit them – then you are bound to worry. If you are running out of the food you got for your family from the food bank last week and you're still waiting for your Universal Credit to come through – then you are bound to worry.

This has been a really difficult year for farmers and food producers. Just to give one example, dairy farmers in parts of England say they have been asked to dump their milk as processors struggle to work through their supply. One farmer based in Kent said she had to dump 11,500 litres (in old money that's 2,500 gallons) from her bulk tank. A spokesperson for the National Farmers Union said **“We have seen the almost complete loss of the foodservice market and closure of restaurants and cafes during the lockdown which has left some processors with little or no business. This has led to some farmers feeling like they have no option but to dispose of milk on farm.”** Dairy farmers were struggling before Covid struck so their worries have really increased.

So what is Jesus really saying in our reading? Here's the opening couple of verses:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?”

On the face of it, Jesus is saying not to be concerned about the basic needs of life – even life itself. In one of these verses he seems to imply that we don't have to work to provide food for ourselves and our families.

Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Well, as I said at the beginning – this is not the reality – as those who have to use foodbanks to survive will testify. But, here I think is the reality – Jesus is telling us not to make material things the focus of our life. When we worry we take our focus off Jesus – we focus on material things rather than heavenly things.

Harvest reminds us about how generous and good God is to us. As that famous hymn says: ***“All good gifts around us are sent from God above. So thank the Lord, O thank the Lord, for all his love.”*** Yet we worry about all sorts of stuff. A classic example was when the Covid crisis was in its infancy and we worried about having enough toilet rolls or antiseptic wipes, or baby nappies. So supermarket shelves were quickly emptied by panic buying. This has happened again recently and some supermarkets have had to put limits on buying similar products. So this year at Harvest we should offer up special thanks for all those who kept the supermarket shelves stocked, delivered the Government's food parcels for those shielding, did shopping for the vulnerable and staffed the food banks up and down the country.

Worrying can become all consuming and take over our lives. So how can we as Christians deal with worry? How can we stop it taking over our lives? In his letter to the Philippians, Paul gives us the answer:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Here, Paul is echoing Jesus teaching about not being anxious about anything. He says that we should give it all to God in prayer – and in giving it all to God, he gives us real peace of mind. The peace of God that passes all understanding. That peace which is beyond human comprehension which comes when we offer the whole of our lives – worries and all – to God in prayer. Our focus needs to be on God's Kingdom and all

that it means to us – it means living out those kingdom values in our lives so that others may see God through us.

At home we have a resource book on contemporary reflections and in this book is a lovely piece of writing entitled 'Fretwork'. Frets are another way of describing worries. Now most of you know that my hobby is 'Fretwork' or, as it's known in America, 'Scroll Saw Work'. Fretwork involves taking a plain piece of wood, transferring a pattern to it and then cutting out the 'frets' with a special saw and very fine blades. The 'frets' are the waste pieces you don't need. So by removing the waste – the 'frets' – you can create something quite nice from something quite plain. Frets or worries take our focus off God and his Kingdom. They get in the way of us being the people God created us to be. Here is just part of this meditation on 'Fretwork':

My soul, do not fret – because you do not understand;

Trust God and do good. – because that is the evidence of our trust.

Do not fret because you are not satisfied – trust God and do good – because that is the road to contentment.

Do not fret because you do not see God at work – trust him and do good – because that is the very faith that frees him to work.

Be settled, my soul, in the sovereignty of your God.

Do not fret – it only leads to evil. Take the fretsaw and cut it out.

Be settled my soul in the sovereignty of your God.

I love that phrase about our souls being settled – not worrying, but being settled - and there's been a lot of worrying and anxiety this year. Maybe that's our Harvest theme this year of all years – to settle in the sovereignty of our good and generous God – and we can only be settled if we take all our worries and frets to God in prayer because settled in him we will find peace. If we cut out the frets then we can be shaped and transformed into something beautiful. We can be transformed into the people that God wants us to be – the people who know that peace of God which passes all understanding.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. AMEN

Prayer Pointers

Loving God,

Thank you for the many ways in which you provide for us:

Food, family, friendship,

Housing, health, happiness,

And ways to use our time and talents.

We lift to you too the ways in which we remain in need of these things.

God of generosity,

May your kingdom come.

We pray for people in our community and beyond

Who are facing unemployment, ill-health, isolation or money worries at this time,

And especially for those who are unable to afford enough to eat.

We pray for supportive relationships, practical provision and real hope.

God of compassion,

May your kingdom come.

Thank you that you call us to play our part,

Working with you and with others to bring about change.

We pray for political decision-makers and leaders:

Give them courage and insight to develop policies and systems that support the flourishing of all,

So that even in challenging times, no-one goes hungry and everyone has dignity.

God of justice,

May your kingdom come.

Thank you for those who are serving and caring for others,

In churches, in charities, and public services,

In our neighbourhoods, in our homes, and in many other contexts.

Would you give them strength, rest and perseverance.

As they work to support others, we ask that they too would receive all they need to thrive.

God of love,

May your kingdom come.

Source of all life and giver of all that is good,
hear our prayer,
and make us one in heart and mind
to serve you with joy forever.

Amen.