

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

7th February 2021: Second Sunday before Lent

Hazel writes:

I know that we cannot easily meet in person still, but it is so good to hear of letters being written, phone calls being made and Zoom meetings being held. These will all help to keep us connected as a church community supporting each other. My prayer is that it will also lead to being able to make new connections into our wider community once we are able to do so again, so that more people will know about the love that God shows us through others.

Messy Church is on Friday 12th February at 3.45pm on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/MessyChurchWestWickham/. We will be preparing for Shrove Tuesday, so there'll be lots of Messy Pancakes!

Next Sunday, 14th February there will be a **service to help in preparing for Lent** on our YouTube Channel at 10am. This will be livestreamed from St Mary's Church and will give a demonstration of preparing ash for the service on Ash Wednesday, where everyone will have a chance to 'ash' themselves and there will be some guidance on resources that are available for use during Lent.

We have a plan to **open the church buildings for private prayer** on Ash Wednesday. This will only be for a brief period of time but will enable those who find the place important to them, to mark Ash Wednesday. We would also like to open St Francis' church every subsequent Wednesday morning for an hour. Please do not feel under any obligation to take part in this, but if you would like to be involved in opening up the building, please contact Joan Burford (jandbburford@talktalk.net or 020 8777 2034) who will put together a rota for the weeks ahead.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday – 17th February. On that day, both churches will be open for private prayer and there will also be an on-line service (we are currently considering the best format for this).

One of the opportunities that will be available during Lent will be meeting with others in **Home Groups**. Currently we cannot do this face to face, but three groups are meeting on-line on Zoom and have agreed to open up their meetings each week to others. They will all be following the same material from a book 'The Nail' by Stephen Cottrell. This follows Christ's crucifixion from the point of view of different people and we will be exploring this in our sermons, so that each week the groups pick up on the character who was the subject of the sermon on the previous Sunday. This will also

enable us to possibly look at clips from the video of 'The Passion' which we didn't watch all the way through last year. If you would like to join one of the groups, please would you contact the relevant leader who will let you know the relevant link for accessing the meetings:

- Richard Ford (richard.ford73@gmail.com or 020 8289 2432) if you'd like to meet on a Monday evening at 8pm;
- Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 07771 782914) if you'd like to meet on a Wednesday evening at 8pm;
- Ken Bryan (kennethabryan@aol.com or 07939 535996) if you'd like to meet on a Friday morning at 10.30am.

You can join different meetings each week if we know about this in advance.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – A video of the service has been posted to the websites for today. All other 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 - Marking Chinese New Year
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Truro Cathedral
 - On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. = Mark De-Lisser hosts final of Gospel Singer of the Year from Gorton Monastery.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet next week on Wednesday (Feb 10th) at 2.30pm in the Hewitt Room at Emmanuel Church.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they need UHT Milk (Urgent) Fruit Juice (Urgent), cold meat, vegetables (particularly carrots), desserts, shaving gel/razors. There are large stocks of Pasta, rice, beans, soup, cereals, tea and toilet rolls and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

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 Rotary Club is offering FREE **Work Club workshops** to help with a job search on-line via Zoom. They all run from 10-11am on the following dates:

- Fri 12th Feb – Interview skills
- Weds 17th Feb – Ace your LinkedIn profile
- Thur 25th Feb – Start your own business

To book your place, email rotaryworkclub@gmail.com

Ivy Sheen's funeral will take place at St. Marys at 11.00 a.m. on Friday 19th February. There are a **very limited** number of spaces and if there is anyone who would like to attend, please get in touch with Beryl (0208 289 8097) and we will let you know if this is possible. The service will be live streamed for those unable to attend.

On Thursday 23rd February at 8pm we have an **open meeting** with Bromley Civic Society, who will be giving a virtual tour and history of Bromley's Seven Town Centre **Parks and Gardens**. Followed by the opportunity to ask questions and talk about gardens. The meeting will be on Zoom and details will be sent round in a flyer during the weekend before the meeting.

Locks on doors in both church buildings have had to be replaced. If you have not been given a new key for the main door at St Mary's but need one, please contact Bob West. If you need a replacement key for the kitchen door at St Francis', please contact Barry Burford.

Last Sunday evening some of us gathered on-line to **light a candle** to remember all those who have died from Covid and to pray for our nation. Many people around the country have continued to do so every evening at 6pm. Here are some photos of candles lit from our community. If you would like to share yours, as a sign that you are part of this praying community, please do send a copy of your picture to francisandmary9@gmail.com.



Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl bbolton@ntlworld.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

Almighty God,
give us reverence for all
creation and respect for
every person, that we may
mirror your likeness in
Jesus Christ our Lord.

First Reading:

Colossians 1: 15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the
invisible God, the firstborn
of all creation; ¹⁶ for in him
all things in heaven and on
earth were created, things
visible and invisible,
whether thrones or
dominions or rulers or
powers—all things have
been created through him
and for him. ¹⁷ He himself is
before all things, and in him
all things hold together.
¹⁸ He is the head of the
body, the church; he is the
beginning, the firstborn
from the dead, so that he
might come to have first
place in everything. ¹⁹ For in
him all the fullness of God
was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and
through him God was
pleased to reconcile to
himself all things, whether
on earth or in heaven, by

making peace through the
blood of his cross.

Gospel:

John 1: 1-14

In the beginning was the
Word, and the Word was
with God, and the Word
was God. ² He was in the
beginning with God. ³ All
things came into being
through him, and without
him not one thing came
into being. ⁴ In him was
life, and the life was the
light of all people. ⁵ The
light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness did not
overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent
from God, whose name was
John. ⁷ He came as a witness
to testify to the light, so
that all might believe
through him. ⁸ He himself
was not the light, but he
came to testify to the
light. ⁹ The true light, which
enlightens everyone, was
coming into the world.

¹⁰ He was in the world, and
the world came into being
through him; yet the world

did not know him. ¹¹ He
came to what was his own,
and his own people did not
accept him. ¹² But to all who
received him, who believed
in his name, he gave power
to become children of
God, ¹³ who were born, not
of blood or of the will of the
flesh or of the will of man,
but of God.

¹⁴ And the Word became
flesh and lived among us,
and we have seen his glory,
the glory as of a father's
only son, full of grace and
truth.

Post Communion Prayer

God our creator,
by your gift, the tree of life
was set at the heart of the
earthly paradise,
and the bread of life at the
heart of your Church:
may we who have been
nourished at your table on
earth, be transformed by
the glory of the Saviour's
cross and enjoy the
delights of eternity;
through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

This passage that we have today is so deep in meaning that it would take a lifetime to unpack and I am not qualified to do that but what can be said is that it was written by John with many audiences in mind. There were the Jews, and as he wrote in Greek so there were the non-Jewish believers. And there were sects and groups that were developing with differing emphases in their faith and beliefs.

But his fundamental desire was to make it extremely clear what for him and all people was the significance of God sending his son into the world. As he writes in chapter 20 verse 31 'these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name'.

Like trumpeters heralding the entry of the king, so the first words of John's gospel herald the opening of a gospel of the king.

The Jews would have sat up to take notice. And they would have noticed how it had strong echoes of the beginning of the scripture. They would have known Genesis by its opening words, just like we know hymns by their opening line, so for them 'In the beginning' is the first book of scripture and it is when God created.

Creation brought all things into being and then there was light to dispel the darkness then people to inhabit the earth. And God said it was all good.

For the Jews words were more than just sounds - they were active. I think we can understand this if we think of the powerful words Churchill spoke during the war or more recently the words of Captain Sir Tom Moore. They gave people courage and they gave people hope.

So for the Jews they would have understood that it was God's word that brought things into being. John is saying that the creative word now came to earth in human form.

He was there in the very beginning of all things. Not just at the beginning of human life on earth but at the very beginning. At the moment of creation.

Jesus shares God's eternity. There is no beginning. He predates all existence. And if Jesus is the word of God then they are one. 'the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.

Both God and the word are equally honoured, worshipped and adored.

The word that brought all things into being was now being humanised in the form of Jesus to show us God and to guide us on the next part of our human journey.

Jesus is fully human as we heard last week but also fully divine as we hear in our gospel passage today.

Life and light are core themes of John's through his gospel. He starts his gospel with the words 'What has come into being in him was life'. And the great verse John chapter 3 verse 16 'for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'. Eternal life is to mean the quality of life that God has.

To believe we must be convinced that Jesus truly is the Son of God and then accept his commandments and his example. Believe in our mind, trust in our heart and base our actions on his.

The use of the word light appears six times in six verses here. As at creation the first thing that God created was the light. So Jesus was there to illuminate the world and here to bring light to all people.

John the Baptist is here pointing people to the light. He is even admitting that there is now someone greater than he is that the people should be following.

Elsewhere Jesus refers to himself as the light. Chapter 8 verse 12 'Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.'

Darkness being the sin and evil in the world. The darkness hides many things. People who have something to hide love the dark because it can be painful to have light shining on evil deeds. Or even for us on things that we are not proud of what we have said or done.

Darkness can also be for ignorance. Those who don't know where they are going. Such as when the disciples are in a boat in a storm and are distraught and in darkness before they see Jesus when he walks on the water towards them, and then he lightens their path. They see him and believe.

At the resurrection Mary Magdalene came to the tomb as it says 'while it was still dark'. She thought the world had put out the light in crucifying Jesus. But she was soon speaking to the risen Christ and was filled with joy that she wanted to share with everyone.

Conversely when Judas was about to betray Jesus where they were having the last supper John writes 'So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night'.

So without Christ the world is dark. He brings light onto all things. And people cannot put the light out now that he has come.

Jesus is the true light: the real deal as they would say today. He came to the Jews, but they didn't want to admit who he was. He should have been welcomed like a king, yet he was rejected by those who should and could have known better.

Some people did receive him and partially recognise him for who he was.

And today God offers everyone the chance to become children of God, but not all take up the offer.

We now come to verse fourteen. Here is the reason for the whole gospel. The creative word which creates, directs, guides, controls and puts order into the universe, came to earth in the form of a man.

For God to come to earth in the form of a man is something that the human race didn't deserve and it was by an act of love that it was done. By grace which means that it was unmerited by man and out of the generosity of God.

God was not to be thought of just as might, majesty power and judgement but also now for his love for his creation both physical and human.

Jesus came to show people what God was like. So much easier to understand the concept of God if we are shown what it is like. From theologians to ordinary people Jesus shows us what God is like.

Jesus did things to show the glory of God. Not for himself did he turn water into wine or raise Lazarus from the dead or that he offered himself up on the cross but it was to glorify God. And in his dying moments in chapter 17 verses 4 and 5 he says 'I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me

in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed’.

In the Old Testament God’s glory was seen at significant times when he appeared to men. In the cloud leading the children of Israel out of the desert, or when Moses received the Ten Commandments.

Jesus coming to earth gave people the opportunity to see God’s presence. And what they saw more than anything was that at the heart of God is love.

I know we often feel we don’t know as much scripture as we should. Well I am sure we know many passages, if not completely. Here is one of them which it is fundamental to our understanding of what we believe. When asked about our faith we can confidently say that as in scripture it says that God created the world and our saviour Jesus Christ was with Him. And he then became man, firstly to experience and understand his creation, secondly to show us how to live, thirdly to die for our sins and finally his resurrection overcame death itself.

If we truly believe that Jesus is the Word of God then we can become children of God and join with the whole of creation in saying the words of our opening hymn today ‘Jesus is Lord’!

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Thank God for coming to meet us in his Son, Jesus. Give thanks that through Christ we can pray with confidence and know that we are loved. Help us to see the sacred in our daily lives – to see God’s divine presence in our encounters with others and in our moments of stillness and contemplation.

Thank God for all the efforts being made to vaccinate the people of our country against Covid. For all the NHS professionals and the volunteers who staff the vaccination and testing centres and for the scientists around the world who have developed the vaccines.

Continue to pray for peace in our world – especially this week for peace and harmony in Myanmar. Pray that truth, justice and integrity may triumph over military power. Pray for wisdom for our Government and advisers as they have to make difficult decisions about easing the lockdown policies and getting children back to schools safely.

Pray for all those who are ill and for those who have had surgery or treatment recently – especially for Geoffrey Smith. Pray for all the staff in our local hospitals who are still struggling with the large numbers of Covid patients on the wards. Especially pray for all hospital chaplains in their difficult work at this time – pray that they may be blessed and be a comfort to those they meet on the wards.

We give thanks for all those who now see face to face the glory of the Kingdom of Heaven. Pray for those whose earthly life has come to an end – especially for Ivy Sheen, Samuel Akadi, Dennis Barcoo and for Captain Sir Tom Moore. May they now experience your greater glory. We pray for those who mourn the recent death of those they've loved, especially Ivy's family - Joan, Margaret and Martin; Samuel's fiancée, Amy and his young son Isaac and for Darren and Mark Barcoo mourning the death of their father, Dennis. We also remember those whose anniversary of death occurs at this time, including Alan Page-Wood.

God of all, who loves each of us for who we are, to whom each life matters, who counts the hairs on our head who knows when a sparrow falls; teach us to love as you love, to respect, to honour, to care and to protect each of our sisters and brothers, that your embracing, including kingdom may come now and your love be known by all, always.

Amen.

(Andrew Nunn, Dean of Southwark Cathedral)