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Sunday 25th October 2020 Last Sunday after Trinity

Collect

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: help us so to hear them, to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that, through patience, and the comfort of your holy word, we may embrace and for ever hold fast the hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Old Testament Reading: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 15-18

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. You shall not render an unjust judgement; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbour. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbour: I am the Lord. You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord'.

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-8

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

Holy Gospel: Matthew 22: 34-end

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, "The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet" ? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Post-communion prayer

God of all grace, your Son Jesus Christ fed the hungry with the bread of his life and the word of his kingdom: renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness sustain us by your true and living bread; who is alive and reigns, now and for ever.

Amen

Reflection

Our gospel begins with Jesus' declaration of what are the two greatest commandments, the summary of the Law, on which all the Law and the Prophets depend. 'The Law and the Prophets' means the whole Hebrew Scriptures, our Old Testament, indeed the whole of God's revelation and sharing of Godself with Israel. This is what it's all about, says Jesus – and Judaism has agreed with him – or he with Judaism. So in the generation before Jesus, one of the greatest of the rabbis, Hillel, was asked by a gentile, 'Recite the whole Law standing on one leg, and I will become a Jew.' So Hillel stood on one leg and said, 'Love your neighbour as yourself. That is the whole law. All the rest is commentary. Go and do it.' And the Shema, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength,' is put on all the doorposts of the houses of observant Jews and in the phylacteries, the little boxes they wear on wrist and forehead when they pray. Indeed, Matthew is the only evangelist who seems to suggest this was a hostile question to Jesus. In Mark, an impressed rabbi asks it and praises Jesus' answer. In Luke, it is a scribe who gives the summary of the Law and Jesus agrees with him! The issue there becomes, 'Who is my neighbour?' and produces the parable of the Good Samaritan – anyone you can help is your neighbour.

If we try to drive a wedge between Jesus and these commands in the Book of Deuteronomy, from which they come, all we'd find is that Jesus adds loving with all our mind. But the lawyer in Luke gives the summary with the word mind in it, so that won't do! This addition is useful rather to remind us that we are to love God with our whole being and so we need to let our faith govern our thinking and think through our faith as well as feel it and will it and do it. Of course, we have different gifts and

callings, but an anti-intellectual Christianity is not what the Bible commends.

Love, then, is what it's all about. So a sermon about our text that tried to include everything about it would never end! We need to dwell on it all our lives.

Reciting, or better for many, singing something often helps drive it deeper into our consciousness, to help it form us. So here is a short rhyming version or hymn of the summary of the Law. [I put it in this month's Messenger.] I can't sing it because of the Covid rules, but let me recite it. [It is long metre so it goes to the Old Hundredth, for example.]

**This is the first command of all:
To love our God with all our soul,
With all our heart and mind and might:
This is to share God's life and light.**

**God's love is not a selfish will:
God's love goes out to care for all;
And, when our love for God is true,
Then we must love our neighbours too.**

**We love because God loved us first:
Christ loved when people did their worst.
To love and lend a helping hand
As Jesus did, is his command.**

This last verse of our song reminds us that God's commands are not all of what it's about, for God gives before he asks. So it is in the Old Testament too – the law is given after God has rescued the people from Egypt. God's liberating love defines the love in proper justice and freedom that the Law of Moses demands, as we see in our Old Testament reading. God's creative and saving love comes first and is to guide and form ours. And the later verses of our gospel reading may be important here. The Exodus formed and saved Israel, and remains relevant to us, as its outcome in the summary of the Law shows. But Israel in Jesus' time expected another and perhaps final salvation, through God's anointed. What was this final salvation to be like? This would be defined by the anointed, the Messiah. And the Pharisees, on their reading of the scriptures, saw the Messiah as Son of David, another David. In Hebrew, 'Son of' meant 'like' as well as 'descendant of.' David saved Israel by military victory and conquest. But Jesus is saying that the God's final salvation - which he was to bring as God's Messiah – is something greater. It was to come not as military conquest, but as love's victory on the cross and by the resurrection. And the one greater than a son of David was indeed Son of God and came to make us children of God through himself. Jesus revealed God as the Trinity of love, into whose life we are called as adopted sons and daughters. That is the love which defines us. So Jesus, even more than Moses, shows us what the love to which God calls us is. It is a generous, self-giving love, that indeed values the other infinitely.

There are many kinds of love.

♥ Love can mean 'like a lot.' So we may love strawberries. God doesn't eat us. Yet Jesus took pleasure in being with people. We are to find our joy and pleasure in God, as God finds pleasure in us in our good. And so it is good we find pleasure in other people in their good.

- ♥ Love can be a passion, as in erotic love, falling in love. That isn't quite the way we love God and God loves us, yet it echoes God's love and ours. Jesus' Passion is a passion of love. The Bible includes The Song of Songs, a collection of love songs, which are taken by Israel as describing love between God and Israel, and by Christians as the love between God and the Church and between God and the soul. It is good to fall in love with God as God falls in love with us, valuing God as the true lover sees the wonder of the beloved.
- ♥ Love can be friendship, the love of common interests, and often means a certain equality between the friends. That is vital in our love for other people, but even in relationship with God, Jesus says he makes his followers his friends, raises us, by grace, to share God's interests and to be raised in a way to God's level by living the life of God's Spirit as God's children.
- ♥ Love includes affection, the comfortable love. We can never presume with God and lose respect and awe, yet we are called to be comfortable with God, and to relate to him in the most ordinary things of life. In today's epistle, Paul certainly shows a love for his neighbours, the Christians of Thessalonica, that includes affection, in that it is like the love of a nurse for her children. So we need to accept God's affection as well as other loves, and love others with a love that includes affection.
- ♥ All the kinds of love find their fulfilment in God's love for us and ours for God. But the most central is that self-giving, unselfish love Jesus gives. God loves us before we were – creation was by and for love. God loves us in seeking Justice, even in disciplining us, for our good, and so raising us to true freedom, as the Law shows in our first reading. That love takes on the results of evil, to bring us forgiveness in Jesus' cross. May God's love inspire us to love God and our fellows and God's creation in our turn, now and for ever. Amen.

Canon Richard Morgan

Intercessions

Jesus, Messiah, we come before you in adoration and praise. Loving you with our whole hearts, so give us, your Church, grace to show that love to others. We pray for the Anglican communion and today especially for the Church in Wales; also for our diocese, for our bishop Rachel and for the Ewelme Benefice, particularly for those who worship at home during the current restrictions.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Messiah, before you rulers and governments are humbled. We pray that those who hold power will use it wisely and justly and we prayer especially at this time for those in local and national government in our own land. For Elizabeth our Queen and for all in authority. Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Messiah, your love leaves no one untouched. We pray that you will bless our communities with your love, remembering this week all those from our local schools, praying that they will find rest and refreshment during the half-term break.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Messiah, your compassion overflows beyond any boundaries; anoint with your healing love and grace any who are in need of our prayers at this time, including

Keith, John, Dave, Bryan, Bob, Pam, Sue, Lynne, Mary, Chris, Frances, Janet, Joan, Norma, Anna, Shirley and all who care for the sick.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Jesus, Messiah, your love extends to the cross and resurrection; in this hope we bring before you those who have died recently amongst them Jennifer Rogers, Leslie Duncum and Marion Jones. We pray for your comforting arms to surround all those who grieve at this time.

Lord in your mercy; **Hear our prayer.**

Joining our prayers with the prayers of St James the Great, St Mark, St Giles, St Bartholomew and all the saints, we pray merciful Father; **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

If you would like someone who is currently unwell or in particular need of prayer to be named on the weekly pew sheet, please email the parish office giving the person's name and also your name as the contact.

Pastoral Care

Home visiting is now possible in certain circumstances and following Covid guidelines. Please let Canon Michael (546459), Revd Ian Gardner (546895) or Revd Jane Wood (07983 623525) know of those who need to be contacted or those who are in hospital and we will get in touch. Marion Kee (860364) or Pat Jones (860696) are also happy to be contacted for Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield.

Service Sheet for Worship at Home

If you are unable to join the Sunday services, please do make use of the reflective service for use at home alongside the prayers and readings for the day which can be found on the pew sheet.

If you would like a copy please contact the office ewelmeeparishoffice@gmail.com

Service Live Stream for Sunday 25 October, 2020

The link for the live stream and subsequent recording is <https://youtu.be/PKJZ3lktz50>

Clicking on this link should open the live stream or the recording. If it doesn't seem to work, copy/paste the link to your web browser. Alternatively, just go into YouTube and type Ewelme Benefice into the search box and click on the relevant service.

We apologise for the sound problem we encountered on the 11th October. This proved to be a fault in the sound system itself, which will now be fixed. Thanks to George White, we will (hopefully) have a temporary setup in place for this Sunday

Last week's recording at Holy Cross was successful – it can still be found by going into YouTube and searching Ewelme Benefice.

Tony King

Attending services

Due to social distancing, the number of people who can attend services in church sadly has to be restricted. If you are planning to attend a service in one of the churches, please can you email Clive in the Office on ewelmeeparishoffice@gmail.com or leave a message on

the Office number 549280. **This is becoming more vital as more people are wanting to attend our services.** We have been asked to keep details of attendance for 21 days for Track and Trace purposes.

Next Sunday's services 1st November All Saints Day

10.00am Holy Communion in St James

10.00am Holy Communion in St Giles

A time for remembering Sunday 1st November

The weekend closest to the Feast days of All Saints and All Souls is when the Church traditionally remembers all those who have died. This year, due to the Covid restrictions, we will not be holding special services in our churches but we are extending an invitation to anyone who wishes to remember a departed loved one, to drop into either **St James or St Giles between 2pm and 4pm on Sunday 1st November.** There will be an opportunity to light a candle to remember someone, to sit quietly and reflect and, every quarter of an hour, the names of those who have died over the past year will be read out. It will be possible to add names to this list on arriving at the church. Letters have been sent to those whose loved-ones funerals we have conducted during the past year. Please do let people know about this open time for remembering.

Morning and Evening Prayer in St James

Morning Prayer is now being said in St James every Monday and Thursday at 9am and Evening Prayer every Monday and Thursday at 5pm. These are public services and anyone is very welcome to join these short (20 minute) said services.

Thursday Holy Communion in St James at 10am

This service is now taking place every week and lasts for about 30 minutes. In order to socially distance we use the pews in the central aisle. Please remember your face coverings!

Request from Marion Mills

I have the task of organising the new rota for Welcomers, Readers and Intercessors for the three churches, St. Giles, St. Bartholomew's and Holy Cross. I would therefore like to compile an up to date list of people who are prepared to offer themselves to this part of church life. At the moment, as you all know, church services are very different to what we are used to, however in the hope that we will one day get back to being able to worship together more often, I would be very grateful if you could reply to me letting me know which of the following you are prepared to do.

Dursley's on-line Christmas Market

As we are unable to hold the Christmas Market this year, we're trying something different. Using an on-line catalogue it will be possible to place orders for some of the popular items that you would have been able, in 'normal times', to buy at the Market. To do this though, we need to have some 'stall holders'; people who are willing to produce things for sale; items like cakes, scones, preserves, table decorations, Christmas wreaths, etc. If you would like to offer to take part as a virtual stall

holder, please email Caroline on caroline.vegpach@gmail.com as soon as possible. We hope this venture will raise some funds to cover the lost income from the Market, but will also be something different and a bit of fun.

'New' Churchwardens

Three out of our four Churchwardens have remained the same this year following the re-election of Ann Hardy and Pauline Thomas in Uley, Owlpen and Nympsfield and Caroline Marrow in Dursley. Chris Morgan was elected in Dursley to replace Austin Meares and Chris and Caroline were sworn into office on Wednesday by Canon Michael. This is an unusual departure due to the Coronavirus, as the swearing in would normally be done by the Archdeacon at a large service. Bishop Rachel has given authority to incumbents to do the swearing in this year. Ann and Pauline will be 'done' on Sunday 1st November. Thank you to all of them for being willing to take on this role for us.

Food Bank

The Food Bank is now operating again at St James' and donations are welcome. Uley village shop and both Tesco's and Sainsbury's have food donating points which can be used. Please continue to donate.

Jennifer Rogers RIP

Jennifer's funeral is on Monday 2nd November at 11.00am in St Giles.

Covid restrictions mean only 30 invited guests can attend. People would be very welcome to pay their respects outside the church

Canon Michael is off duty until Saturday 31st October. In his absence please contact the Parish Office or Revd Jane Wood.

Visit us on Facebook:

 Ewelme Benefice Family

Stewardship, Parish Giving Scheme, gifts and donations

Very many thanks to all members of our church community who have helped us financially by registering for the Parish Giving Scheme, increasing contributions through the Parish Giving Scheme, sending cheques to the treasurers or making bank transfers into our parish bank accounts.

These acts of generosity are really, really appreciated.

Please visit our website for quick and tax efficient online ways of giving -

<https://ewelmebenefice.co.uk/coronavirus/>.

You can also donate directly via on-line banking:

Uley account:

Barclays 20-33-83 A/C 43042057

Uley with Owlpen & Nympsfield Parochial Church Council

Uley Community Shop will take donations in sealed envelope marked 'Uley Church'

Dursley account:

Lloyds 30-98-29 A/C 02391588

Dursley PCC

All Souls ~ Sunday 1st November



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