

Newsletter St Mary's and St Augustine's

7th Sunday after Trinity Sunday 26th July 2020

Sunday's Readings: Psalm 119.129-138; 1 Kings 3.5-12; Matthew 13.31-33;44-52.

Wednesday's Readings: Psalm 11; Ezek. 18 21-32; 2 Cor.12.

Reflection by Claire

We all like a good story be it a film we can lose ourselves in or a book we can't put down. Something that captivates our imagination and transports us into another world. I wonder what kind of story you enjoy, is it a romance, a tragedy, a mystery? What makes a good story, is it the plot, how it has been written, the style, the substance, the twist at the end? Our lives are essentially a story, a tapestry of different chapters and events. Joys and tragedies which all mesh together to form something of who we are, what our lives are about. Jesus knew the power of telling stories, he would often captivate the crowds and also challenge the ruling class with his parables. They were a way of Jesus being able to communicate the deeper truths of the kingdom of God. Truths which are difficult to explain other than in the form of a story.

Sometimes the stories we tell are just fragments of a whole, but these fragments offer us glimpses of a truth and a hope and point us towards the One source of life.

The readings from Matthew offer us a series of stories ... the kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, a grain of yeast, a hidden treasure, a pearl of great price, a fishing net ... They are all written to help us to engage in the work of the Kingdom of God. The hidden wisdom of God, the wisdom that Solomon asked of Yahweh for, more than earthly riches: 'give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people' (1 Kings 3.9). It is this wisdom which we so need now to navigate our way through the choppy seas of this current age with all the uncertainty and challenges it holds for us.

The Muslim community have just begun their festival of Hajj. In which millions of Muslims would have gone on pilgrimage to Mecca but this year only a few hundred will be participating. The festival is one which is a great leveller when all Muslims journey side by side regardless of status, stripped down before God or all the trappings that they hold in life. For many of us we don't need to go on a pilgrimage this year to feel that we are stripped down and vulnerable before God. The effects of the last few months and the ongoing crisis will have caused us all to reflect more deeply on what is important in life and in our faith tradition.

*My life flows on in endless
song
Above earth's lamentation.
I catch the sweet, though far
off, hymn
That hails a new creation.*

*No storm can shake my
inmost calm
While to that rock I'm
clinging.
Since love is Lord of heaven
and earth,
How can I keep from singing?*

*Through all the tumult and
the strife,
I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul.
How can I keep from singing?*

John Bell

As we begin very tentatively to regroup as a Christian community it will be the stories that we share that will help us to understand more of the nature and the purposes of God's kingdom amongst us. As we come back together again, we can also begin to tell new stories and within these stories hope will be found. A hope which can sustain us and nurture us and also teach us of the wisdom of the kingdom of God.

As we start meeting together again we will recognise that things are not quite what they used to be, there is a strangeness to how we do things: sanitisers, facemasks and keeping a distance are our new normal. But all these practices keep us apart (which is their intention). So, the challenge for us as a Christian community is how to we gather back together well, how do we create community. I suggest it is through story and beginning with our own story ... I wonder what wisdom and treasure your story may hold? "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in their joy goes and sells all that they have and buys the field" (Matt 13.44).

Notices

St Augustine's Church will be holding a simple Communion service on:

Sunday 9th August and Sunday 23rd August at 10.30am.

There is an information sheet letting you know the changes and what to expect so that we can open safely. If you intend to come to the service and have not had a leaflet please let Claire know who will forward one to you.

Sunday's Collect

**Generous God,
You give us gifts that make us
grow:**

**Though our faith is small as
mustard seed, make it grow to
your glory and the flourishing
of your kingdom;
Thorough Jesus Christ our
Lord.**

St Mary's Church will be meeting outside in August:

Wednesday 5th August at 12pm a Socially Distanced Picnic – all welcome.

Sunday 16th August at 10.30am a short communion service followed by a picnic.

Sunday 30th August at 10.30am short communion service followed by a picnic.

There is a Zoom service at 11am on Sunday. Please let Karen know if you need a link to this

Roots resources this week include two sets of material - prayers and activities for the lectionary readings <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/i-am-looking-for/public-copies/worshipathome26jul>

Revd. Claire Dawson cdawson@blueyonder.co.uk 0114 272 4987: Day off Friday

Revd. Karen Cribb revkaren@stmaryschurch.co.uk Mobile: 07580 378507: Day off Tuesday

Revd Canon Mike West mike.west23@tiscali.co.uk 0114 266 2188

Revd. Dr. Ela Hall 0114 268 7002 elanutuhall@gmail.com

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