

# **St Mary's, Barton-upon-Humber: Readings, prayers and notices for the week June 28-July 5**

## **Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity**

Almighty God, you have broken the tyranny of sin and have sent the Spirit of your Son into our hearts whereby we call you Father: give us grace to dedicate our freedom to your service, that we and all creation may be brought to the glorious liberty of the children of God; through Jesus Christ our Lord

or

God our saviour, look on this wounded world in pity and in power; hold us fast to your promises of peace won for us by your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

## **Readings:**

Jeremiah 28.5-9 Psalm 89.8-18; Romans 6.1b-11 ; Matthew 10.40-end

## **Next Sunday – Fourth Sunday after Trinity**

Zechariah 9.9-12; Psalm 145.8-15; Romans 7.15-25; Matthew 11.16-19, 25-end

**Services at 8.00 and 9.30** (we're not quite sure what yet, but ...!)

## **Meditation**

I hope it's only a wicked, rather than a malicious sense of humour that I possess, but every now and again aspects of Chrch life give me cause for a wry grin. Take, for example, Newman's rousing 'Firmly I believe and truly,' included in all manner of hymn books. And how happily folk with firm, non-hierarchical Anglican credentials sing 'And I hold in veneration, for the love of Him alone, Holy Church as His creation, and Her teaching as His own,' despite the fact that, when you think about it, this is well down the path towards Papal Infallibility, not generally part of the CofE's take on things....

And so it is with this morning's Gospel reading. It calls to mind the parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25, of course, and when we all read the line *whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.* we tend to miss the words 'in the name of a disciple' and read it as – if you like – 'Every deed of kindness will be rewarded.' I'm sure it will – but that's not what this verse is on about.

A lecturer of mine, long gone to his reward, remarking on these verses said, 'People often point to these verses as a justification for Christian Aid. They're not. Compassion doesn't actually need to be justified!' and if we want to find Biblical instructions to be merciful and compassionate there are loads of them, in Old and New Testaments, some on Jesus' own lips. So once we accept that the Bible and Tradition both insist that Compassion is expected of every human being, we can ask what special is going on in this verse.

One of the background stories to this – oddly, not the OT reading set for today – is from chapter 4 of the Second book of the Kings, where Elisha the prophet regularly receives hospitality from a couple who see him going past. The woman says to her husband, 'Look, I am sure that this man who regularly passes our way is a holy man of God. Let us make a small roof chamber with walls, and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that he can stay there whenever he comes to us.' This isn't about simple charity, it's about recognition of the presence of God.

I think this is key to understanding a Gospel passage which is more about mission than about doing the decent thing. The person who makes even the most token response to the presence of

God – as apparently insignificant as offering a cup of water – is nonetheless making a response to God which is not going to go unregarded. The tiniest awakening of an encounter with God is enough for God to note and to work on.

So the first lesson for us to spring out of this is not to disparage the most tentative and seemingly unremarkable responses to God. A flicker of recognition is all that is needed to spark what might become a warming flame.

Secondly, it turns upside down some of our thinking about mission, which is What We Will Do For Them, pouring our superior knowledge and our neat answers and so on into the empty bucket of their need. It's the other way round, here – God appears not just rather hidden in the person of the disciple, but also hidden in the guise of one who is *needy*. It calls to mind the conversation in John's Gospel between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, where the encounter begins with Jesus in need and asking a foreigner for water. It is a humbling thought that sometimes even God presents as not powerful, not all-sufficient, not able to provide for himself. Sometimes the Church must be a beggar to enable others to express their own generosity and humanity. That sort of humility and weakness is a hard one to learn, but it could be that's one for the Church in the West to get used to.

And thirdly (because these things always happen in threes), if the receiving of a disciple (or a prophet, or...) is to receive God, then there's that uncomfortable question to ask of ourselves – how visible is God in us? I wouldn't necessarily recommend Elisha as a model of transparent godliness (see 2 Kings 2.23-4!!) but I'm sure we've all met Christians who are even better than we are at obscuring the love of God from those whom they encounter: as the great Teresa of Avila once said, 'From sour-faced saints, Good Lord deliver us!'

It's not as if it hasn't been done before, either. For once, I don't turn to my own Benedictine tradition for a humble and needy Church – they say that among the Seven Wonders Of The Ecclesiastical World a humble Benedictine is one of the rarest (I should add that the list also includes a clean Franciscan!) — but to that of the Friars, who, instead of gathering to work in monasteries chose to go into the highways and byways carrying next to nothing and dependent on the charity of those they met on the way. Without power or influence, they were an open invitation to see God hidden in the person before them – and amid the religious and social turmoil of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century they became a guiding light.

And in a funny way that *does* bring us back to the rewards for Good Deeds: if we Christians *do* become better at revealing the God we carry within us, maybe others will become better at spotting God in those other places in the world where he lies hidden and disguised – and respond to him there as well.

Fr David

**Those in need.** Please help us keep our intercessions up to date and leave requests for prayer – either by email to david.rowett@lincoln.anglican.org, or the phone, or even a note through my door, and encourage others likewise.

**Do keep in your prayers....** Jan Petch, and Joyce Gibson who are making progress, and Brian & Muriel Peeps who are currently in Beech House.

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## For your prayers

**Church:** That we become visible signs of God at work in the world; The Church in North India; Chaplains in the NHS. Our own parishes as we prepare to recommence public worship.

**World:** Health workers, all those involved in keeping essential services running. Our own political leaders. Those charged with peace-keeping and peace-making. The governments & peoples of China, Syria and the Middle East, North Africa. All seeking to resolve the issues surrounding protection of the environment, of infection control and of migrancy. For the people of the United States (and perhaps ourselves), facing hard questions about society.

**Our Community:** For all our schools and those who work in them. Those who work in the local media: BBC Humberside, the Scunthorpe Telegraph, the Hull Mail.

**Those in need:** Those whose lives or livelihoods are endangered by Coronavirus. Those who fear the prospect of isolation. All who live in areas of conflict or tension; the homeless, the poor, the sick, the enslaved, the hungry and the abused. Victims of terrorism.

**Those for whom our prayers are asked:** Melissa Milbourn, Julie Newton, Penny Archer, Kate Eaton, Mike Page-Chestney, Juliet Large, Dennis Cowe, Janet Petch, David Witter, Brian & Muriel Peeps, Sally, Nell.

**Departed:** Betty Hebblewhite, Baby Ruby Gorbutt. Those who have died as a result of COVID-19, especially those who work in the caring and medical communities.

## Updates

**Re-opening for worship:** Next Sunday we're allowed to be open once more for worship, though we're not allowed to sing (funny that we can sing at a Crematorium but not in church. Oh, well). As yet we've had no information from on high about what sort of services we'll be allowed to have, but at 8 and 9.30 there will be something, we promise.

Obviously we're a long way from 'back to normal': 'Social Distancing', hand sanitisers, no refreshments (yet) after the services, and there'll be some fine tuning goes on over the next few weeks. Our bishops have been keeping us as informed as possible, but despite the announcement over a week ago that we could reopen, government guidelines won't be issued until some time next week! Once we know where we are we're re-instating the Wednesday 9.30 service, but Sunday at 6 is paused until September.

If you have access to Facebook, we'll keep that updated with any more information we have, ditto the website, and if in doubt get in touch with me. Thanks to Bill Cox for his hard work these last few weeks, and to Rob Smith, who's done all the risk assessment work – and to Tom Smith and Charlotte Smith's other half Danny, who valiantly shifted St Chad's altar to stand in front of the chancel step until use of the High Altar resumes.

**Occasional Offices** otherwise known as 'hatches, matches.... We don't have a lot of information on these yet – we've been told that weddings can go ahead but there's considerable fuzziness from the government about what numbers will be held to – it's odd that for worship 'social distancing' is what counts, but an arbitrary number of 30 has been kicked around for weddings. Nevertheless, at least we can get them under way, and do pray for Chris and Olia who've been waiting patiently for their wedding for weeks and who finally have got their date permitted! Funerals are pretty much the same really, except that there's no complication about long preeparations and things. We think that with 1m social distancing and household groups we can get 30 in the nave without any difficulty.

What the Churches have been told about Christenings is very vague, but we've got plans worked out for them to minimise close contact between clergy and the family, and we're going to use the back of Church in front of the choir vestry as the place for baptism, since there's considerably more flexibility there as to how people group.

It's all very interesting.....

**Parish Magazines** for July are now available, and those distributors who are happy to take theirs out should let David know as soon as they can, please.

**Daily Hope phone line:** A Church of England initiative, Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line. The line – which is available 24 hours a day **on 0800 804 8044** – has been set up particularly with those unable to join online church services during the period of restrictions in mind. It's an 0800 number, so landline calls will usually not cost you anything.

**Barton FM:** Just a reminder that Robert is still keeping the station supplied with short acts of worship and meditations.

## This week...

Yesterday the Church remembered (in this diocese anyway) **Sarah Swift** who was instrumental in setting up what became known as the Royal College of Nursing. Coincidentally next Sunday is the 72<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the NHS, and there'll be some material both in church and on our website, including prayers for the NHS. Apart from that, we celebrates **Ss Peter and Paul** on Monday, about whom you don't need to be told very much, but do remember in your prayers all those who expected to be ordained this Petertide, especially our own Fr Robert and his cohort, all 'on hold', and the twelve deacons-to-be who will be licensed as lay workers on Saturday and ordained deacon as soon as it becomes practicable. Given that the feast of **St Thomas** (Friday) was also a traditional day for ordinations it's a good week to pray for all those considering their calling as Christians, regardless of whether it involves dog-collars or other strange garb.

And on July 1 an encouraging commemoration, that of **John & Henry Venn** of whom you've probably never heard, but who worked from the mid 1700's into the Regency reviving the Church of England from what we'd now call the Evangelical tradition. The Church was in a pretty poor state at the time – it was routinely part of a Churchwarden's job to get the Rector/Vicar out of bed *if* anyone turned up do Sunday worship and the Venns were an important part of getting the spiritual batteries of the church charged and reconnected. We aren't the first generation to face 'interesting times,' nor even the second.