

REFLECTIONS

This week we have another reading from Acts concerning the earliest days of the Christian Church. Opposition had arisen in Jerusalem and Stephen is seized and brought before the Sanhedrin on a charge of blasphemy. His martyrdom has close resemblances to Jesus' trial and death: Stephen declares to the High Priest that he will see the Son of Man at the right hand of God, just as Jesus had done; he forgives his killers and commends his spirit to the Lord Jesus, modelling Jesus' actions. Stephen is an archetypal disciple, closely following the ways of his Lord – a 'little Christ'.

The gospel reading comes immediately after the Last Supper and points us forward to the ascension, when Jesus will depart physically from his disciples, for the final time. When that occurs, Jesus promises the disciples: 'Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.' (14.12). Instead of being limited to just one body, in a small corner of the earth, Christ's Spirit will be in all his followers, resulting in there being many 'little Christs' whose work will have worldwide scope.

Going deeper

The departing Christ for ever remains the way, the truth and the life, the model for all who would wish to follow him. He gives us his Spirit to help us love and serve him, enabling us to do the things we are incapable of doing in our own strength. But personal experience teaches us that Jesus' promise: 'If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it', is no simple mantra for success. These words need to be balanced with Jesus' instruction 'to pray always and not to lose heart' (Luke 18.1). Perhaps to truly pray 'in Jesus' name' requires some degree of Christlikeness, by that I mean being drawn into his life and love with the Father, sharing their love, their agenda and priorities. When our prayer is emptied of self and focussed only on what brings glory to God, who knows what is possible!

I wonder...

Philip spent a long time with Jesus, yet failed to truly recognise in him. What has it taken for you to recognise Jesus as 'the image of the invisible God' (Colossian 1.15)?

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

Sunday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
Preacher: Bishop Roger

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan

Tuesday - Live

5.00pm Zoom Evening Prayer Leader: Paula Griffiths

Wednesday - Live

9.30am Zoom Holy Communion Caroline Curren Alex Jeewan

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 11th	Morning Psalm 145 & Luke 4:38-end Evening Psalm 105
Tue 12th	Morning Psalm 19 & Luke 5:1-11 Evening Psalm 97 & 1 Peter 1:13-end
Wed 13th	Morning Psalm 30 & Luke 5:12-26 Evening Psalm 99
Thurs 14th	Morning Psalm 16 & Acts 2:37-end Evening Psalm 80
Fri 15th	Morning Psalm 138 & Luke 6:1-11 Evening Psalm 66
Sat 16th	Morning Psalm 146 & Luke 6:12-26 Evening Psalm 118

The Grapevine

COVERING THE PARISHES OF SAFFRON WALDEN, WIMBISH, DEBDEN, ASHDON AND HADSTOCK.

Fifth Sunday of Easter

10th May 2020

Collect

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

First Reading: Acts 7.55-60

Standing before the high priest and the council, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.

Gospel: John 14.1-14

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.' Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.'



See St Mary's church, SW, website at www.stmaryssafronwalden.org to find out more.



Please 'Like' our Facebook page so we reach more people! Click on the link on our website, or go to: www.facebook.com/saintmaryschurchsafronwalden

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In May please pray for:
Sewards End & Little Walden C of E, Radwinter Primary School

The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Roger Morgan, Audrey Cox, Kenneth Mark

EVENTS

THANK YOU ALL so much for your emails, cards and gifts. We are so touched by your kindness and generosity, and though we may be far apart from you, we feel you are very close. Please do continue to pray for us as we adjust to life as a family of three. We so look forward to the time when you can meet Magdalene face to face! Love, *Rachel and Sam*

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends,

When will the lockdown end? This is the question everyone is asking as we await the Government's next phase of measures to see us through this crisis. We are in the uncomfortable position of finding others determining the future for us, which results in anxiety, as we sense a loss of control over our own lives.

We are often told to 'let go and let God', which is right, but never easy. And there are other lessons to learn as well. If we didn't appreciate it before, we now all know that we depend on others for our daily wellbeing, especially those who perform the least well paid jobs in society – our nurses, carers, cleaners, shelf-stackers, van drivers, refuse collectors and so on. Also, being away from Church, only able to glimpse each other on Zoom, makes us more aware of how much we miss physical fellowship and worship together. Good as Zoom is, its inherent blurriness, freezing, and 'out of sync' speech rob us of the facial cues the sighted rely on, leaving us feeling dissatisfied and strangely tired. Even the most introverted of us may be re-evaluating our need for real human contact.

Past generations would have viewed this pandemic as they once did the plague: a judgement of God on human sin, calling for collective repentance. Today we are unlikely to see the source of Covid-19 in God himself, but perhaps we should see it as an inevitable judgement on human pride. The likely source of the virus is a 'wet market' in Wuhan, where lack of concern about overcrowding and low hygiene have enabled the virus to jump from animals to humans. History shows that our race to control the world through scientific and technological developments often outpaces our wisdom in using them. We have fallen into the trap of thinking we can manage our own future and even control nature. Whilst we must look to scientists for effective vaccines, we must avoid thinking that science alone is the hope of the world. The theologian Stanley Hauerwas says that Christ calls us to learn 'to live out of control'. In these chaotic times, we must recognise our dependence on others and never lose sight of our deeper dependence on God.

It is a daily struggle to 'let go and let God', but be encouraged by Jesus' words: 'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.'

With love and prayers,
Andy Colebrooke

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can, and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr

NEWS

ALL CHURCHES IN THE TEAM AND THE PARISH OFFICE REMAIN CLOSED until further notice in accordance with national guidelines.

EMAIL BULLETINS We are issuing regular email bulletins that highlight information from the website, attach the Grapevine and service sheet and provide the Zoom links for live services that weekend. Please email Dawn at office@stmaryssafronwalden.org if you would like to be added to the distribution list.

WORSHIP ONLINE There are several ways of joining in our team worship which can be accessed from links on St Mary's Church at Home webpage.

<http://www.stmaryssafronwalden.org/churchathome>
You can watch a pre-recorded services via youtube and you can participate in live Zoom Services led from various locations in the team. The service sheets used for these services and Grapevine are also available on the webpage. If you would like technical help in setting up Zoom, please contact Gerald Gardner gerald.gardner@ntlworld.com or Steve Hasler s.hasler@btopenworld.com

The Church of England has opened a free telephone line for the lonely and vulnerable where they can listen to messages of hope and select whether they want to hear hymns, a service, prayers or reflections as well as advice on Covid-19. Callers will hear a special greeting from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Please do pass this on to anyone you think might be interested. The number is 0800 804 8044. *Mothers Union*

CONGRATULATIONS Elliott Randall, our organ scholar (Michael Swindlehurst organ scholarship) has been awarded a place to study the organ at the Royal College of Music Junior Department. He has worked extremely hard and rightly deserves this place. All at St Mary's are really proud of him.
Gill and Denis

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



CartoonChurch.com

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