

REFLECTIONS

There has been much talk of slavery in recent weeks, and in our first reading today, Paul uses the word eight times. Of course, in Roman society, slavery was a common practice, and his readers in the fledgling church will have been familiar with it – some will even have been slaves or owned slaves themselves. As he says, he is speaking to them in human – and contemporary – terms to help them to understand point he is making here. He outlines a stark contrast – they are either slaves to sin, or to righteousness. In the final verse, one beloved of wayside preachers, he declares that the result of one road is death – of the other, eternal life.

So what are we to make of this? Quite rightly, we have been urged to lament the sins of our past, which continue to the present day, particularly in relation to racism. Yet do we leave it there? In our context, racism is only one of many ways in which we continue corporately to become wealthy at the expense of others, allowing self-interest to dominate. I am sure that you can think of many contemporary examples, just as I can.

Paul speaks of righteousness as the opposite of sin, and the Bible frequently speaks of righteousness, or justice, as what God demands (*Micah 6: 8*). Gaining at the expense of other people is not God's way. This is true both at the level of society and international relations and at an individual level. Rather than exploiting others, we are to welcome and respect them in God's name.

So Paul urges us to become slaves not of the sin of self-interest, but of the justice sought by God. With Paul, the wayside preacher urges passers by to repent and change their allegiance, giving their lives to God and behaving in ways that flow from that commitment and from understanding of scripture. Yet for many people the change is more gradual: seeing the detrimental effects of exploitation, and changing the ways in which we treat others, can lead to reflection and change at a deeper level. We become what we do, and as we welcome him in the stranger, God works within us to open us up to eternal life. For exploitation does not only disadvantage the one who is exploited – it not only flows from, but also reinforces, spiritual malaise in those who are responsible.

Going deeper

In our Gospel reading, there are echoes of Matthew 25 (31- end). In the context of today's readings, it is worth re-reading Jesus's powerful parable of the sheep and the goats and the challenge within it, perhaps alongside the short book of the prophet Micah.

The words that Paul uses make it clear that we cannot **earn** eternal life, even if we are enslaved to God and follow his path of righteousness. Eternal life is his free gift. By contrast spiritual death is described as the 'wages' of sin, the consequence of seeking our own self interests.

I wonder.... What aspects of our behaviour as individuals are we being called to change in response to today's readings?

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ONLINE

Sunday - Live on Zoom

9.30am Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
9.30am Morning Prayer Leader: Tim Hardingham
10.00am Holy Communion President: Hilary Davey

Pre-recorded (youtube)

Act of Worship Leader: Alex Jeewan
Preacher: Chris Bishop

Tuesday - Live on Zoom

5.00pm Evening Prayer Leader: Mike Felgate

Wednesday - Live on Zoom

9.30am Holy Communion Caroline Curren Alex Jeewan

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

Mon 29th	Morning Psalm 71 & John 21:15-22 Evening Psalm 124
Tue 30th	Morning Psalm 73 & Luke 15:11-end Evening Psalm 74 & Romans 12:1-8
Wed 1st July	Morning Psalm 77 & Luke 16:1-18 Evening Psalm 119:81-104
Thurs 2nd	Morning Psalm 78:1-39 & Luke 16:19-end Evening Psalm 78:40-end
Fri 3rd	Morning Psalm 92 & John 11:1-16 Evening Psalm 139
Sat 4th	Morning Psalm 76 & Luke 17:11-19 Evening Psalm 84

The Grapevine

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

Third Sunday after Trinity
28th June 2020

Collect

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 your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: *Romans 6.12-23*

Do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel: *Matthew 10.40-42*

'Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and 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.'



See St Mary's church, SW, website at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.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/saintmaryschurchsaffronwalden

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In June please pray for:
Saffron Walden Assemblies Team, Stort Valley Schools Trust

The family and friends of those who have died recently:
John Read, Ken Jeffries, Donald Calcott

EVENTS

LITTLEBURY FETE WITH A DIFFERENCE! If you feel you're maybe missing out on summer fetes this year why not take a look and join in virtually. The community have come together to raise funds for the continuing upkeep of Holy Trinity
www.facebook.com/groups/Littleburyfete2020/
littlebury.org.uk

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

With churches poised to re-open, albeit initially in a limited way, I have been thinking a lot about the role of technology in our church life. I confess to be something of a dinosaur, and have often thought that mobile phones and social media can do more to separate us in real terms than to bring us together. The common sight of friends meeting for a meal out whilst all on their separate phones is an example. And how do 'virtual friends' compare with real ones that you can laugh with, and even – in time – hug?

Yet experience of zoomed services is challenging my thoughts about how we go forward as a Church. It has both pros and cons. On the plus side, it has been great to be able to worship across our churches, with people from St Mary's alongside folk from the village churches, instead of in our separate groups. I have come to know a few more people who worship elsewhere. The YouTube service frees me up to take part in a different way, at a time that may suit me better. In Birmingham, a friend who is in a wheelchair has been able to read in church on-line with ease. I know too that a number of people have taken advantage of the opportunity to join worship from elsewhere – perhaps somewhere they lived previously. The downside is that I miss all members of our Ashdon community, especially those unable to access the internet in this way. And conversation is limited by the sheer size of the virtual congregation – lots of waves and smiles, but little or no room for private conversation or sharing of confidences.

So where do we go from here? Just back to our separate communities? Surely not. A mixed economy may be possible, retaining some forms of on-line worship. I don't know the answer. The Diocese is planning a series of events for clergy and others, to reflect on how the church may change after lockdown. Permission to re-open for worship is one thing, but only prayerful discussion will show us the ways in which to be church in a post COVID world. Much as we may long for things to be as they were, we will need to ask for God's spirit and for confidence to move forward positively in ways that may initially not feel comfortable for many of us.

On a completely different subject, please remember in prayer Mina Smallman, former Archdeacon of Southend, whose 2 daughters were tragically killed recently in North London. I did not know Mina personally but valued the contribution she made to some of the Pilgrim study course videos.

With love and prayers
Caroline Currer

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

O Lord our God, we continue to ask for your comfort and a sense of your presence in these difficult times. We hold before you the families of all who have lost loved ones, whether through violence or illness. Give us also courage and boldness to listen to your voice as we look to the future and seek to witness to your love in our communities. **Amen**

NEWS

ALL CHURCHES IN THE TEAM REMAIN CLOSED FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP, in line with government and national church guidelines. **Please check St Mary's website for updates.**

PRIVATE PRAYER St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, is currently open for private prayer on Wednesday and Sunday 12-4. *Gill and Denis*

ST JAMES CHURCH, SEWARDS END, will be open for private prayer on Sunday 2.30-4.00pm. *Lynne & Mike*

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@stmaryssaffronwalden.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.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/churchathome>

You can watch a pre-recorded services and you can participate in live Zoom Services around the team. The service sheets and Grapevine are also available on the webpage.

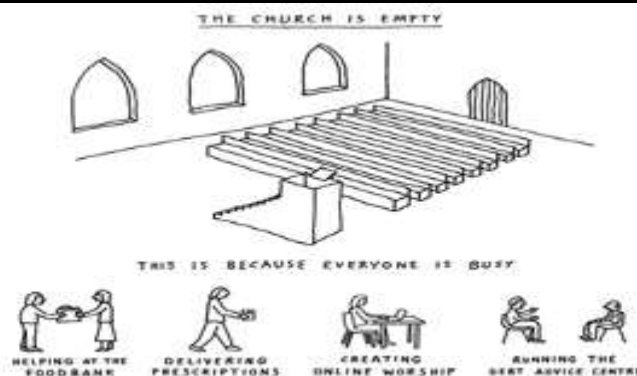
YOU CAN NOW JOIN LIVE WORSHIP BY PHONE - you don't need a computer or tablet. If you would like to know more please contact Steve Hasler 01799 525041
s.hasler@btopenworld.com

ST MARY'S C OF E VA PRIMARY SCHOOL in Saffron Walden is looking to recruit 2 volunteers as Church Governors. We can offer an enthusiastic, dedicated staff and existing governing board and a primary school with a nurturing learning environment. A teaching background is not necessary and most of the current governors have different career backgrounds. We are currently all working remotely due to COVID19, so access to a computer/tablet and some basic knowledge of how to use Zoom/Microsoft teams is helpful, but training can be provided. If you are interested please contact Vicky the Chair of Governors on chairofgovernors@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk

COPY for next month's "PARISH NEWS" may be sent to the editor (andycolebrooke@gmail.com) by Sunday 5th July.

July's edition of **PARISH NEWS** is available on the website at <http://www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews>

CARTOON BY DAVE WALKER



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