

REFLECTIONS

From foundation stone to stumbling block in just a short time: poor Peter. Last week we heard of his momentous declaration that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of the living God. And now, in the verses that follow (although not necessarily immediately afterwards), Matthew records Peter's complete misunderstanding of what that will mean. Clearly rejection and suffering and death were not in line with his ideas of what would happen to the Chosen One. Did he expect that Jesus would show everyone the truth about God and that they would recognise him as Peter had done himself? Perhaps he hadn't fully worked it out, but suffering and humiliation were definitely not in his script.

So let us be clear about Peter's problem here, for we can learn a lot from it. It is not that Peter is distracted by the things of the world in the way that we were warned about in the parable of the sower, but that his **spiritual mind set** has been influenced by human priorities and assumptions. Jesus tells him that he is setting his mind on human things not divine things. As the prophet Isaiah had warned (*Isaiah 55:8*), 'God's ways are not our ways'. We too often forget this – we are surprised when bad things happen to good people, when the wages of sin do not seem to be worse than the rewards of good behaviour. In faith as in life, we like to know, and the more faithful and committed we are, the greater the temptation to think that we **do know** the mind of God. Jesus' words about denying self and losing our lives for his sake are as hard for us today as they were for Peter and the disciples. Our message is truly counter-cultural in a way that we can be tempted to forget, thinking sometimes that being a Christian is just about being nice and kind and behaving with integrity and love of the sort that we recognise.

Yet Paul's words to the Christians in Rome point to a love that goes far beyond what we see as its proper limits, which blesses those who persecute us and repays evil with good. Stories of victims who meet with their persecutors – and even manage to forgive them – illustrate how very hard it is to live out Paul's words.

I have always liked the hymn 'I cannot tell...' – perhaps partly because of the tune, but more especially on account of the words. For there are so many aspects of life that I do not know and cannot predict, even from a basis of commitment and faith – all the hows and whens and wheres. Yet each verse continues'.... but this I know'. These are the things I hold on to: God's overwhelming love for me and for you and for all humanity, from which even death and hardship cannot separate us.

Caroline Currer

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES SUNDAY IN CHURCH

St Marys SW 10.00am Holy Communion President: Alex Jeewan
Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Currer

THIS WEEK'S SERVICES ON ZOOM

SUNDAY

9.30am Holy Communion President: Paula Griffiths
11.00am Holy Communion President: John Saxon

TUESDAY

5.00pm Evening Prayer Leader: Judith Hasler

WEDNESDAY

9.30am Holy Communion Caroline Currer Andy Colebrooke

NEXT SUNDAY 6th September 2020 SERVICES IN CHURCH

St Marys, 8.00am Holy Communion 1662
SW President: Andy Colebrooke
Hadstock 9.30am Family Service Leader: Paula Griffiths
Ashdon 9.30am Holy Communion President: Caroline Currer
Wimbish 9.15am Service of the Word Leader: John Saxon

The Grapevine

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

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity
30th August 2020

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray and to give more than either we desire or deserve: pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of 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 12.9-21*

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gospel: *Matthew 16.21-28*

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.' Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

Post Communion

God of all mercy, in this eucharist you have set aside our sins and given us your healing: grant that we who are made whole in Christ may bring that healing to this broken world, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.



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 August please pray for:
Saffron Walden Baptist Church, R A Butler Schools
The family and friends of those who have died recently:
Margaret Curtis, Alan Edge, John King, Philip Holmes
Those who are unwell:
Pamela Bray

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends

Ever since I was small, I can remember associating September with the 'return to school'. Indeed, I used to be cross with shops that had big 'Back to school' posters from early August, to encourage parents to stock up on uniform and stationery. The holidays had only just begun and the last thing I wanted to think about as a child was going back to school.

This year the return to school has not been taken for granted as it always was. And our thoughts and prayers must surely be with the teachers and other staff seeking to make this work in a safe and manageable way, as well as for pupils re-adjusting after such a long break.

September is also the month of many Harvest Festivals in church. In village communities, these are often services that attract a larger than usual congregation, accompanied by familiar hymns and Harvest Suppers of one sort or another. This year I have been back in a village community, surrounded by fields and watching the crops as they grow and are brought in, with lorries carrying grain and bales of straw as they drive past our house. Along with other personal celebrations, village occasions like this will not be quite the same this year. Yet we can and must still be thankful for the on-going work of all those who have been busy filling the barns and our shops with good food.

It is human to long for things to be 'back to normal'. And as the current uncertainties persist, it is also the case that the situation is becoming increasingly hard for many people. For those without work to return to, for businesses planning to open and then being unable to do so, for young people unsure of their next step after leaving school, but also for those who live alone and all of us missing the lack of ease of social contact. We all long for some certainty, to know how much longer our lives will be disrupted, but that is not likely to be possible in the near future. Please do not sit alone with worries or anxieties, but take the opportunity to share any concerns with a friend, or with one of the clergy team.

In this situation one of the alternative collects (below) seems very appropriate

With love and prayers
Caroline

PRAYER FOR THIS WEEK

Lord of heaven and earth, as Jesus taught his disciples to be persistent in prayer, give us patience and courage never to lose hope, but always to bring our prayers before you through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

BIBLE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK

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| Mon 31st | Morning Psalm 98 & Acts 8:26-end Evening Psalm 105 |
| Tue 1st Sept | Morning Psalm 106 & Acts 9:1-19a Evening Psalm 107 & Mark 7:1-13 |
| Wed 2nd | Morning Psalm 111 & Acts 9:19b-31 Evening Psalm 119:129-152 |
| Thurs 3rd | Morning Psalm 115 & Acts 9:32-end Evening Psalm 116 |
| Fri 4th | Morning Psalm 139 & Acts 10:1-16 Evening Psalm 130 |
| Sat 5th | Morning Psalm 121 & Acts 10:17-33 Evening Psalm 118 |

NEWS

SERVICES IN CHURCH Details are listed on the back page. **It is now compulsory to wear a mask** unless you have an exemption.

Advance booking is required to attend St Mary's, SW as services are now close to capacity and we cannot guarantee that you will be able to enter the church if you haven't booked. In order to book your place please email or telephone the Parish Office before noon on the previous Friday, giving your name, telephone number and postcode.

No booking is required for the village churches but, if service has reached capacity, you may not be able to enter.

PRIVATE PRAYER St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, is open for private prayer on Wednesday and Sunday 12-4. All Saints, Ashdon is open for private prayer on Wednesday and Sunday between 11am and 6.00pm.

ONLINE SERVICES are listed on the back page. Full joining details are available on the weekly email bulletin and on the website. Please email Dawn at office@stmaryssaffronwalden.org if you would like to be added to the bulletin distribution list.

LIVE WORSHIP by phone - you don't need a computer or tablet to join our services from home. If you would like to know more please contact Judith Hasler on 525041 or John Saxon on 541619

PRAYER FOR A NEW TEAM RECTOR After our summer break, we resume the process of discernment for the next Team Rector. This will start with special prayers for the selection process and the prospective candidates during Zoom Evening Prayer with an extended time of intercessions on **Tuesday 1st September** at 5pm. All welcome.

THE TRANSITION PROJECT has assisted people looking for work, preparing CVs and giving advice as how to prepare for interviews. In the present climate the Project is looking for additional volunteers to fulfil this role. If you have time, presently on Tuesday mornings, and may be interested in assisting us do ring Gerald Gardner (01799 500543).

"A CHURCH NEAR YOU" This is a charming little book of sketches and comments on 46 local churches by Denis Dunstone, of St Mary the Virgin, Wendens Ambo. They are available in the Tourist Information office and sell at £10.00 and £7 goes to the PCC, thanks to the generosity of Denis Dunstone. *Joe Hordern*

COPY for next month's "**PARISH NEWS**" may be sent to the editor (andycoblebrooke@gmail.com) by Sunday 6th September.

MINISTRY TEAM

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| Parish Administrator: Dawn Saxon | 01799 506024 |
| Email: office@stmaryssaffronwalden.org | |
| Pastoral Assistant: Judith Hasler | 01799 525041 |
| Email: judithhasler@btopenworld.com | |
| Revd Paula Griffiths | 01799 599141 |
| Revd Tim Hardingham | 01799 542874 |
| Revd Alex Jeewan | 01799 531153 |
| Revd John Saxon | 01799 541619 |
| Revd Dr Caroline Currer | 01799 584839 |