

Collect and readings for Trinity 3

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.
 Amen.

READINGS

Old Testament: Jeremiah chapter 28 verses 5-9

Psalms 89 verses 1-4 and 15-18

New Testament: Paul's letter to the Romans
 chapter 6 verses 12-23

Gospel: Matthew chapter 10 verses 40-42

A reflection from Revd Maureen



When looking through the readings for each Sunday, I often wonder a) what the circumstances were which resulted in the writer using the words they have; and b) why the readings were chosen for that particular Sunday. Sometimes, it's obvious, but often it's not! If you remember, it seemed that last Sunday's readings had a rather downcast tone to them, with the dire warning at the end of the Gospel that we must put our love of God before even our closest family! As I read this on Sunday morning, it reminded me that I have a book on my bookshelf written by someone who rejoices in the name of Norvene Vest(!) called 'Preferring Christ: A Devotional Commentary and Workbook on the rule of St. Benedict.' I must admit that I have yet to read it, but it's one of the books that I hope to sit and read when I retire! Just to give you a flavour of what the book contains, a few chapter headings are: 'The Qualities of the Monastery Cellarer'; 'Distribution of Necessities According to Need'; 'Weekly Servers in the Kitchen'; 'Those who arrive late at the work of God or at Table'; and 'Brothers who are commanded to do the impossible!' Perhaps we should all have a copy of this, in order to make sure that we put God before all else.

Anyway, to turn to this week's readings- I hope you will agree that they are a little more upbeat than last Sunday, but also I feel that they are appropriate to where we find ourselves both from

a church and from a society point of view. Our old friend Jeremiah, who was not known for his optimism, is talking about the return of things – the vessels of the house of the Lord and the exiles. Well, most of our churches are opening briefly each

**PSALM 89:15
 BLESSED ARE
 THOSE WHO
 HAVE LEARNED
 TO ACCLAIM
 YOU, WHO WALK
 IN THE LIGHT
 OF YOUR
 PRESENCE, O
 LORD.**

week for private prayer and people are returning to work albeit still taking precautions against the virus, but we are slowly returning, nevertheless.

Our Psalm this Sunday is full of positivity and a great shout of jubilation to celebrate and affirm God's constancy.

St Paul's letters are often tricky not just to read but also to understand, and his letter to the Romans is no exception. I think Paul is trying to say that we should take heart in that, because we have the grace of God within us, we should find it easier to live our lives as God would wish us to do rather than put our own wants and needs first – harking back, perhaps, again to last week. This passage is, after all, a continuation from last week's New Testament reading from this particular letter.

**I WOKE...THE
 DUNGEON FLAMED
 WITH LIGHT...**

*My chains fell off
 My heart was free*

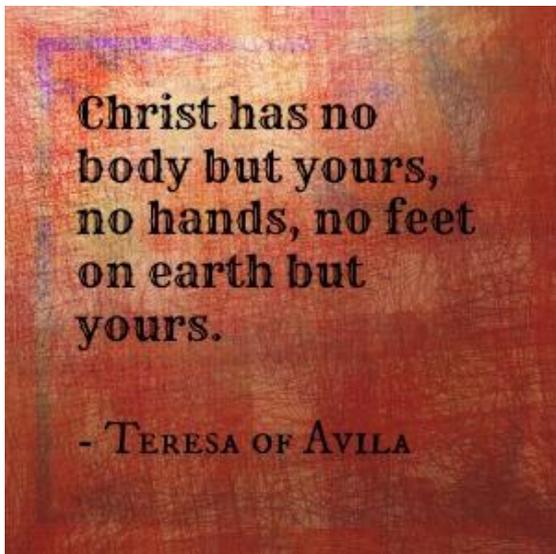
*I rose, went forth, and
 followed Thee.*

~CHARLES WESLEY~

Finally, our Gospel reading from St Matthew is positive in that it speaks of welcome and reward but also goes on to talk about serving one another – even if in a simple and mundane manner – as I know many of us have been doing during this time of lockdown from which we are now slowly and carefully being released.

Continued...

We do not serve one another just because we anticipate receiving something in return (or at least we shouldn't, or serve in some way because it makes us feel good about ourselves and perhaps in the eyes of others!) but Matthew is telling us that we will be rewarded eventually for the way in which we have lived our lives and in putting others first and acting in the name of Jesus. I don't know about you, but often when I minister to someone – even before I was ordained – they ministered to me although they didn't realise it. I might visit someone feeling a little down or not 'all singing, all dancing' but pretty much every time I said goodbye to that person I felt so much better because - as I had intended to brighten their day - so they had improved mine by sharing with me either memories or a joke or whatever. We don't necessarily have to do anything, but just to be with someone. We can hold their hand or sit and listen and honour them by giving them our time and respecting whatever they may share with us. It sounds simple doesn't it, but that sort of ministry can be in short supply these days. I hope and pray that in these last few months we may have had opportunities to serve others in this and other ways; to be the hands and feet of Christ in his suffering world; and to bring people to recognise Christ in each of us and maybe through our actions help them to think about their own faith and it's possible growth. Who knows what may flourish from our actions and service during these past weeks? All we can do is sow the seed and let God nurture and nourish in whatever way is best.



We cannot and should not take the credit for anything which may come out of our efforts, especially as St Matthew tells us in his writings that we shall not lose our reward. What that reward will be, we can only imagine and wait in faith and hope and trust. Amen.

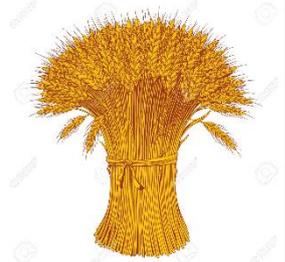
Maureen

Bible Quiz

1. B); 2. A); 3. C); 4. A); 5. B); 6. B); 7. C).
Did you get them all right?

Now for this week's offering of 8 questions!

1. What is the shortest book in the Bible?
2. What is the longest book in the Bible?
3. How many books in the Bible have a title which is a woman's name?
4. How many missionary journeys did St Paul make?
5. Who wrote The Acts of the Apostles?
6. What words are described in the Bible as constituting the first and great Commandment?
7. How many sons did Jacob have?
8. What was the number of sheaves and cows in the dreams which Joseph interpreted?



No multiple choice answers this week, as we feel you probably know your way round the Bible a little better now.

From Gavin and Maureen Lord

Hello again

Another gem from Chris, this time about the wearing of face masks. David is missing thanks to a dispute with a double bass. We wish him a full recovery. An added bonus is a personal appearance by the props department. A star is born. Enjoy!



https://youtu.be/ojs43ESQ_4

Best wishes

Gavin & Maureen

David Smart: the subject of grass

You will remember me telling you of the gentleman in the churchyard - well we have become good friends and he visits the churchyard most afternoons. During our conversations, the subject of grass again came up and has given us more food for thought. (I hope all the weeds in your gardens are now identified and recorded.)



All grasses, plants and flowers descend from the earliest trees. By dropping their leaves and eventually rotting, trees enriched the soil and prepared the way for new plants-and for land creatures. Among the first were the millipedes. A millipede fossil found in some of the oldest rocks in the world in Scotland, is the earliest creature we know of.

Grasses first appeared in the Cenozoic Era around 60 million years ago. With them came numerous rodents which for a while were the main herbivore. Soon to follow were larger mammals, as the grassland covered the continents.



Most of the time we take grass for granted but it is important to life. Grasslands cover 20 percent of all land on earth, with over a 10,000 species found in vast prairies Savannah's and steppes. Grasses include the great bamboos of South Asia, as well as rice, maize and wheat and the lawns of our homes and parks.



Unlike other plants they grow from their base rather than their tip, so they are almost indestructible, capable of surviving fire, flood, frost and drought, grazing by animals and mowing by humans. Grasslands then support and sustain more large animals than any other habitat and are home to the greatest gatherings of on earth. Let us remember that this includes us.

If you are able, go and look at a meadow or our churchyard in spring or summer, see what wildlife abounds, listen to the birds, smell the air, especially after the rain.

Do you know the difference between hay and silage? Failing that look at a painting or photographs and admire their beauty, all given us for free to enjoy.

I can do no better than to finish with a prayer by the late David Adam.

Blessed are you, Lord Creator and lover of all.

You have given us the grasses of the earth to nourish us and provide our daily bread.

Teach us to respect the grasses without which we would die.

We cannot create grass but only work in cooperation with it.

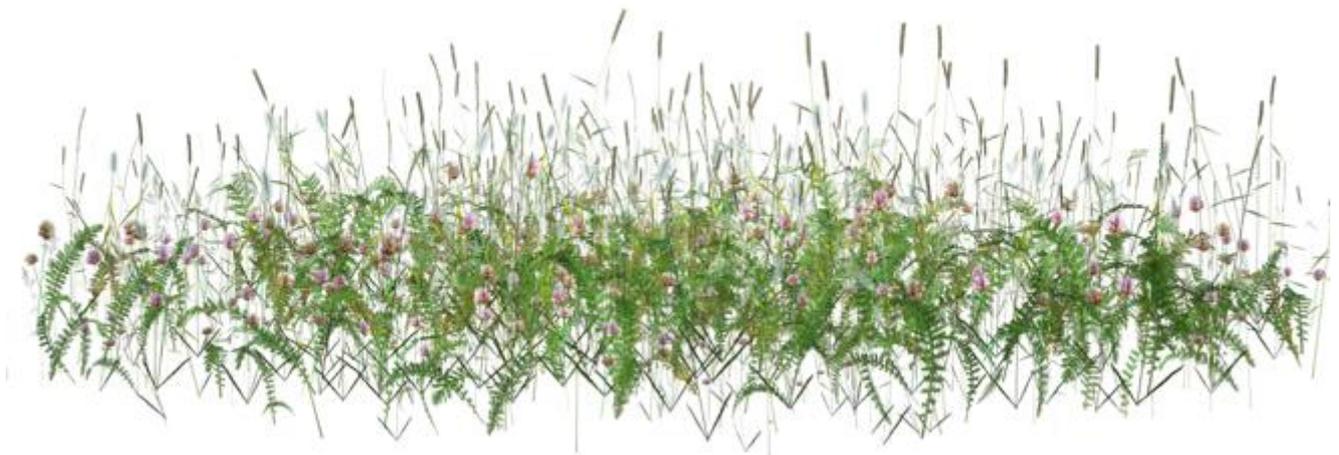
So many creatures are endangered by our misuse of our powers.

Lord, save us from plundering the world to satisfy our own ends alone.

Teach us that we belong to this wonderful and intricate web of life, and to harm a strand within it, is to harm ourselves.

Blessed are you, Lord Creator, and lover of all.

David



Barber Shop Blues: Cascais – The Vision (as experienced by Michael Gale)



The smell of roasting chestnuts filled the air, and drew me irresistibly to the street vendor, who sold me some

wrapped in a cone made of newspaper. While I ate them, I contemplated the Unisex Hairdresser across the Avenida Marginal. When I had finished, I had plucked up enough courage to cross over and enter the establishment.

Once in there, I was asked to wait a few minutes in their separate waiting room.

"Senor. You will come" a musical voice suggested. I looked up at a dark beauty, with long coffee coloured legs disappearing just in time into emerald green hot-pants, which were topped by a tight white t-shirt. I gulped and followed this vision into the men's salon. The Vision wrapped me up and without further ado started cutting.



"My name is Conceição. I come from Brazil" she announced. "I am a dancer." And to prove it she pirouetted from one side of my head to the other. As she worked she chattered – to practice her English. I learnt that she had been working on a cruise ship until it berthed at Lisbon. The she and her boyfriend (a barman) jumped ship to see more of the world. She was starting a new job next month with the dance troupe at the Estoril Casino.

Conceição quickly finished and brushed me down. So I asked her where she had learnt to cut hair.

"Ola! Shearing sheep" she replied with a shriek of laughter. "At home on the farm I help my father. It is difficult when they struggle. But men sit still. Which makes it really easy to just cut by my instinct."

Michael

Saints this week from Revd. Maureen

There are several saints commemorated by the Church this week, but three stand out in importance and are considered major feasts. If we were having services in our churches at the moment, the priest would be wearing red – the colour of shed blood – because these saints sacrificed their lives for the faith.



The first celebration is for the Apostles St Peter and St Paul on 29th June, to whom Combe Florey church

is dedicated. These two are linked because they are considered to be the foundations of the early church – St Peter – also a follower of Jesus, and perhaps the most well-known of the disciples - preaching to the Jews and St Paul - having persecuted those who believed in Jesus – having a Damascus (or Epiphany) moment and then being sent to the Gentiles. This feast day is of significance to me because it is the date when I celebrate my ordination as a Deacon in Chichester Cathedral in 2004 – sixteen years ago, this year.

The other major saint to be celebrated this week, on 3rd July, is St Thomas the Apostle – the one who is known as Doubting Thomas. This might be considered by some people as an unfair title as, once he had seen Jesus and – as he said in the upper room – seen the marks of the nails in Jesus' hands and put his hand into the mark of the spear, Thomas makes a startling declaration: "My Lord and my God". Quite a statement and one which none of the other disciples are quoted as making. It is out of this conversation, between Jesus and Thomas, that a blessing is bestowed on all those who have gone before us - but also on us too! Jesus says 'Have you believed because you have seen me? BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HAVE NOT SEEN AND YET HAVE COME TO BELIEVE.'

There are other minor saints who are remembered this week, but Peter, Paul and Thomas are the major ones for us to think about and to give thanks for: Peter, who was impetuous but to whom the keys of the kingdom were given; Paul, who persecuted Christians but who came to belief himself and who risked his life to spread the Gospel; and Thomas, who showed how human he was in his scepticism but ultimate recognition of who Jesus truly was. What an inspiration and example the saints are to all of us, in their humanity, their failings, their sinfulness and yet God knew them, loved them, and commissioned them to spread the good news of the kingdom. May we follow in their footsteps with courage and in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit in the same way that they were empowered.

The wisdom of Solomon? by Adrian Smith

I recently listened again to Handel's lavish oratorio "Solomon" in Sir John Eliot Gardiner's dazzling recording.

The rousing opening chorus of Scene 1 sets the context:

*Your harps and cymbals sound to great Jehovah's praise;
Unto the Lord of Hosts your willing voices raise.*

The legendary wisdom of Solomon is celebrated throughout the work. The priests and the Israelites obviously think that he is a pretty impressive guy:

*Swell, swell the full chorus to Solomon's praise,
Record him, ye bards, as the pride of our days.
Flow sweetly the numbers that dwell on his name,
And rouse the whole nation in songs to his fame.*

Now that's what I call critical acclaim! But, I wondered, who was Solomon, and why does he still enjoy this reputation for wisdom? Indeed, is it deserved? Is Handel's Solomon a very idealised portrayal of the man? I enjoyed the music so much that it inspired me to go back to the Bible and read 1 Kings Chapters 1 to 11.

- Solomon was the son of King David. At age 20 he succeeded him as King and reigned for 40 years.
- God said to him, "ask for whatever you want me to give you." Solomon asked for "a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between good and evil." God was pleased with Solomon's request and promised him not only great wisdom, but also great riches and honour – providing he kept his commands.
- Solomon became known worldwide for his wisdom and insight. In Chapter 3 there is the story of the two harlots who come to him with loads of accusations and a baby, asking him to settle their argument over who is the baby's rightful mother. Solomon calls for a sword to cut the baby in half so they can divide it equally. One of the women, out of compassion for the child, stops the king and agrees that the other woman should have the baby. Solomon thus identifies the compassionate woman as the child's true mother and returns the baby to her.
- He built the first Temple, a luxurious palace and ordered many other building projects.
- The Queen of Sheba showered him with gifts.
- He is purported to have written several books of the Bible including Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes and, in the Apocrypha, The Wisdom of Solomon.
- Solomon dealt with nations that worshipped false gods and it was customary for them to seal a deal by offering a woman to the king to marry. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Many of these wives worshipped false idols. They eventually led Solomon astray to do the same, and his heart rather turned away from God.

The oratorio reflects Solomon's good qualities but makes little reference to his vulnerabilities. The Bible reveals that whilst Solomon was certainly a wise man, he was still just a man.

So what is wisdom? It is certainly different to knowledge and more than intelligence. Thousands of pages have been written exploring the nature of wisdom, but there are two succinct quotations that have, for me, the ring of truth about them.

Wisdom is not finally tested in the schools, Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it, Wisdom of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof.

Walt Whitman (1819 - 1892)

There is no wisdom without love.

N Sri. Ram (1889 - 1973)

These suggest that wisdom is something larger than ourselves. Solomon himself sees Wisdom as an attribute of God, which finally becomes personified as God himself. In the stunningly beautiful seventh chapter of The Wisdom of Solomon he extols the virtues of Wisdom:

For she is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness... in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets; for God loves nothing so much as the person who lives with wisdom.

Solomon's wisdom was a gift from God, and it was when he got led astray and started to turn his back on God that things began to go wrong for him. Notwithstanding these human failings, we are still touched by his life 3000 years later, and Handel's glorious oratorio is a worthy tribute to an extraordinary man.



[Dima Mogilevsky : King Solomon](#)

Sir John Eliot Gardiner, in his recording of "Solomon" has substituted the penultimate chorus as the final one. Thus, the closing chorus rings out in a triumphant, spine tingling crescendo of voices, strings, trumpets and timpani:

*Let the loud Hosannahs rise,
Widely spreading through the skies,
God alone is just and wise!*

Perhaps here we find the key. If we are able to remember that all human wisdom is a gift of God, we may cease our strivings to become wise through our own meagre efforts and simply aspire to become worthy to receive the gift in whatever proportion God sees fit to grant it.

Or to paraphrase Revd. Canon Melvyn Matthews, perhaps, in the end, wisdom is "attained by the abandonment of any attempt to attain it. It is a free gift which is not ours to manipulate."

Maybe the beginning of wisdom is to have faith that indeed "God alone is just and wise!"

Our Prayers

Holy God, you have given us your only Son to be for us, both a sacrifice for sin, and an example of Godly life; Give us the grace to thankfully receive this wonderful gift, and to always strive ourselves to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Everlasting God, we pray for the Church, here in the Bishops Lydeard Benefice and throughout the world, and all Christians, that they may go forward in unity and strength. Help us to respect the beliefs of others even if we do not share them, to celebrate what we have in common and to accept our differences. Guide us in our ministries as we live each day.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Creator God, we pray for people in parts of the world where life is precarious, whether through disaster, poverty, disease, war or the present pandemic. We pray that the time may be hastened when there is peace on earth, goodwill between all people and an affordable cure for Covid-19. Especially we pray for our precious world; help us to be good stewards so that we can pass on your wonderful creation in good order to the generations yet to come.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Father God, we pray today for our friends, our families and our Christian community, that united by our common baptism we may always welcome the newcomer, the stranger and all who are vulnerable. Help us always to follow Jesus' words and advice on hospitality and generous giving and realise that accepting someone's help is as good as giving someone help.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Gracious God, we pray for all who suffer in body, mind or spirit and for those who care for them. We pray for the sick; for those who mourn; for those without faith, hope or love. We especially pray for Val, Pat, Peter, John, Gwen, Joan, Bobby, Lucinda, Norma, Roger and Wendy, Revd. Martin and Sally Perry, and for all others known to us. We remember them now in a moment of silence.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Merciful God, we remember before God those who have died and those who are bereaved by their passing. We give back to you, Lord, those whom you gave to us. Your son taught us that life is eternal and that love cannot die. So death is only a horizon, and a horizon is only the limit of our sight. Open our eyes to see more clearly, and draw us closer to you, so that we may know we are nearer to our loved ones, who are with you.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Faithful God in the week that lies before us may we reflect your love in our families, our church and our community and in doing so, show everyone we meet that we are followers of Christ with a true desire to draw them into our Christian faith.

Merciful Father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Spike's column



Hello my friends.

Hasn't it been hot recently? I like it warm but when temperatures get into the 30s it's important not to get overheated so I've been relaxing indoors for some of the time. Do make sure that you also limit your time in the sun!



During the lockdown many of us have been shopping online and having food delivered. As you can see, I am sampling a delivery from my main supplier. Please do your best to recycle

the packaging or, as I have done, find another use for it.

Of course it's nice that we can now meet up with friends but stay alert! I invited some friends over for a drink in my garden and as you can see, I ensured that social distancing measures were strictly applied.



I understand that the next InTouch will be the final edition and I do hope you have found my advice over the past three months to be useful. If you have questions that you would like to ask me please let me know and I will try to answer them next week.

Meanwhile, look out for each other, like I am in the picture, and I will see you all next week for my final column!



Love from *Spike*

Psalm during Covid
by Elizabeth Clark, the National Rural Officer
for Methodist and United Reformed Churches.
Shared by Katherine Lyddon

How bright was life before lockdown!
How busy and noisy and fun.
We sang, prayed, and praised together;
God was good.
Now there is silence and for some darkness,
loneliness and fear.
Where is God?



The silence is broken by loud insistent bird song,
The darkness is illuminated by a profusion
of flowers and butterflies.
We exchange smiles and greetings with strangers.
As we learn to stop look and listen,
we are surrounded by glimpses of God:
God is here!
God is good!



Prayer

Loving God
Help us to know your presence
even in the darkest times.
Remind us how much we are loved
and help us share that love with others.
In Jesus name
Amen



**Benefice churches are now
open for private prayer**



**The Church of St. Mary the Virgin,
Bishops Lydeard**

is open for private prayer for four hours each week.

Sundays: 09.30 to 11.30
Wednesdays: 09.30 to 11.30

Social distancing measures are in place, including a
one-way system and 'single use' of pews. Please use
the hand sanitiser provided.

**The Church of St. Thomas of Canterbury,
Cothelstone**

is now open for individual prayer and reflection.
Allowing this to continue depends on us adhering
to government instructions and guidance, and we
therefore ask that all visitors read the notes in the
church porch before entering.

**The Church of St. Lawrence, Martyr
Lydeard St. Lawrence**

is open for private prayer from 11am to 12pm on
Sundays and Thursdays.



The Church of St. Pancras, West Bagborough

is open for private prayer on Sunday mornings
from 10.30 until 12.30.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU

The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Combe Florey is
not re-opening immediately.