

Bible Sunday – October 2020

Today is Bible Sunday – but I have used the lectionary readings – but either way, we are using the Holy Scripture to illuminate God's love through the story of God's people which comes to a central moment in time where heaven and earth become one through Jesus – fully human – fully divine...

It was Augustine who felt correct interpretation of the Old Testament could not be found purely on a historical level. He said that 'The New Testament is hidden in the Old and the Old is made *accessible* by the New'. (i.e. *Isa 61 – The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.....*)

For Christians, Scripture is reinterpreted through the lens of the teaching of Jesus and his mission to reimagine the meaning of love in thought word and deed – by showing us how to do it – and showing us that actually, scripture has always shown them how to do it – when interpreted through the heart of God – which is love, justice, mercy, kindness.

Mark Twain is supposed to have said,

"It's not what I don't understand about the bible that bothers me, but what I do understand."

The teachings of Jesus are remarkable for their simplicity and perhaps no more so than when Jesus tells us that to love God with all of our heart soul and mind is the greatest and first commandment.

This is a straightforward commandment but not easy to live out – that we reach out to the Holy Spirit within us to help our thinking to inform our actions to be loving and just.

In the Gospel reading, the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus – to cause him to stumble – but instead of going to one of the 613 commandments of their law - Jesus put together two of the oldest Jewish statements of faith – known as the Shema from Deuteronomy chapter 6 –

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

Where do you go with that – especially when the other statement Jesus declares is

'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' – another reminder of a law written down in Leviticus.

The first commandment leads the way to fulfil our social obligations to one another.

And he makes it clear - "On these two commandments hang all the law and prophets" (v. 40).

As we seek to love as God loves we become more in the image of God and therefore able to love more fully and unconditionally – sharing and caring and also having the ability to give and to receive so that through God's love for us, we can pass that on into the way we live out with others in what we do .

'if you love me you will keep my commandments' - the commandments of Jesus are ways of living that bring about a place in which we live in ease, pleasure, freedom - Christians are called to live that life because we are loved first by God - beyond measure..

And this is the foundation upon which our Hope for Tomorrow campaign rests – you should all have had the packs that were put together for us by now – please ask if you would like one.

We build our commitment to a sustainable future upon the circle of love that exists between God and his people through the power of the Holy Spirit brought to us through Jesus – WE ARE people who have responded to the call of Jesus and why we are here together to live a life of loving community

that is not so much about pounds and pence - or power - but about peace, fulfilment - community spirit and freedom - it's about friendship and fellowship - and about service and passing on the good news of this hope and love - and it's about being in a community that dwells in a place - a house of God a church - which can survive the demands of the world-pull and the demands of staying functional and fit for purpose so that all the love, joy and service of the Gospel we are called to experience and proclaim in our place and our community can be shared and passed on by others in our wider community and beyond... We are giving of God's love through all we do in the name of Jesus Christ through St Peter's Church Wrecchlesham – and the spiritual beauty of giving is that:

- Giving is sharing
- Giving is about overflowing joy, not overflowing wealth.
- Giving is about getting involved in what God is doing.
- Giving is about growing in faith.

We are in it together, and our faithful attempts to build a stronger spiritual and financial foundation is a way of giving thanks to God for all that we receive here as a church family. We are working to get back on track and to keep the parish church flourishing so that it can be a witness to God's love for ourselves and all our community.

Each of us can do what we can – and that's all God asks...

And to trust him as the source of all things and that our needs will be met when we cooperate with Him....

Money is such a tricky thing to talk about but Jesus knows that dealing with money stuff is part of following him. He made it a normal part of discipleship – one in three of his parables is embedded in a story and meaning of money.

And it isn't about the amount we are able to offer – for some that is more or less – and others it isn't possible to offer monetary gifts – but I believe our hearts are what Jesus calls for us – and about our heartfelt intention to make the commitment to do what we can – and that might be to pray – which is precious in its own right...

I don't know about you but my time here has been richly blessed with loving and kind people, support, fun, joy and prayerful experiences of faith I imagine all of you have some story of joy in fellowship – comfort in sorrow – hope in doubt and fear – and have found sanctuary in times of challenges of daily living... So much to thank God for – that he has brought us all here to be together...

Our kind of giving is about getting involved in what God is doing. there is so much more waiting to happen in our church – to nourish ourselves and others through social, spiritual gatherings and teachings and worship.

We are truly turning to our Bibles for inspiration and seeking to follow direction of our faithful god in whom we can depend - our one true leader, through Jesus Christ, whose spirit is working through us all in love - as we all contribute in our own way to mobilise our financial revival and to secure our future stability, trusting that with god, nothing is impossible

We are a flock who has its deep faith and trust in our shepherd, Jesus – who takes responsibility for their beloved spiritual home, and who stand together in solidarity and love – through thick and thin, for the honour and glory of god, for ourselves as his children, and for the community for which we are called to serve.

So today as we thank God for his Word through the Holy Bible, we remember that John tells us, God is the Word, the Word made flesh through Jesus Christ, who shines a light on the darkness, on the spiritual darkness of our lives – which in a sense is even darker as we grapple within the grip of the pandemic - but who works with us through Sacrament, Spirit and Word to move us into the light of God's love and the hopeful promise of God's kingdom.

May the Lord bless us and keep us all safe and close to him – now and always.... Amen