***The Churches of St Mary, Cleeton St Mary; St Giles, Farlow; St John the Baptist, Middleton Scriven; Holy Trinity, Sidbury, St Michael, Silvington; and St Mary, Stottesdon***

**Our Worship Together**

**for the Third Sunday after Trinity**

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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Welcome to our worship together for the Third Sunday after Trinity. Although we are apart, we still worship God in the unity of our shared faith.*

*Let us begin by calling to mind those times when we have not been obedient to God’s will for us, and make our confession:*

We have not always worshipped God, our creator.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

We have not always followed Christ, our Saviour.

Christ, have mercy.

**Christ, have mercy.**

We have not always trusted in the Spirit, our guide.

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, have mercy.**

*A Prayer for absolution:*

May the Father forgive us

by the death of his Son

and strengthen us

to live in the power of the Spirit

all our days. **Amen.**

*The Word of God*

*Today’s psalm is number 13, a song of reorientation, a song of trust in God in adversity:*

1 How long will you forget me, O Lord; forever? ♦

 How long will you hide your face from me?

2 How long shall I have anguish in my soul and grief in my heart, day after day? ♦

 How long shall my enemy triumph over me?

3 Look upon me and answer, O Lord my God; ♦

 lighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death;

4 Lest my enemy say, ‘I have prevailed against him,’ ♦

 and my foes rejoice that I have fallen.

5 But I put my trust in your steadfast love; ♦

 my heart will rejoice in your salvation.

6 I will sing to the Lord, ♦

 for he has dealt so bountifully with me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ♦

as it was in the beginning is now and shall be forever. Amen.

*The Bible reading, from the end of chapter 10 of Matthew’s gospel, is a short one, and finishes the section on Jesus teaching his disciples that we have been following in recent weeks:*

[Jesus said] **40**‘Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. **41**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; **42**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.’

This is the Word of the Lord: thanks be to God.

*This week’s Reflection is from Alex:*

We’ve arrived at the end of Chapter 10 in Mathew’s Gospel – it’s a reading that is short and sweet! Chapter 9 contained the stories of several miracles, but in this chapter, Jesus has, if you like, commissioned his twelve disciples, and all the miraculous acts they have witnessed are now going to become part of their own ministries. Being sent out for the first time must have been an awesome experience.

Like last week’s reading, these few short verses are still Jesus teaching just the small group of his disciples. Last time, we heard Jesus talking about the consequences of the mission he was about to send them on and warnings about opposition that they might expect to meet - he’d warned them of hostility and pain; he’d spoken of taking up the cross, and he’d talked about losing their lives too. But here, right at the end, he now encourages them. He speaks of welcome, of hospitality and of reward before he sends them out.

Putting it simply, Jesus is saying – don’t worry! All will be well, for you and for everyone who welcomes you. He explains that this is because they’re being sent on the very greatest authority – they’re ambassadors, if you like; ambassadors of Jesus – and that means they’re also ambassadors of God. And he speaks more widely of all who will go out in his name, calling them “little ones”, like children who occupy the lowliest of positions.

So these disciples are being not only sent out but received and served. And those who receive the messengers sent by Jesus receive Jesus himself and they too will receive their reward. So receiving is important. Hospitality was an important tradition in the ancient world, and there are many examples in the New Testament where the importance of hospitality is emphasised – you may remember the lovely verse in Hebrews about how one may be “entertaining angels unawares”. If you are open to others in welcome, you are open to God, who is the great Other, coming into your life too. This open-ness to all allows us now, as children of God, to see Christ in all we meet and to welcome them in His name. And this isn’t just welcoming people to church buildings, it’s welcoming all people as fellow children of God into our daily lives.

At this strange time when going out and meeting people has become so unexpectedly precious, perhaps we might all become ambassadors, seeing Christ in all we meet as the world begins carefully to open up again, respecting, protecting and welcoming each other – who knows but that we might meet an angel unawares?

There’s a lovely, ancient Celtic poem that I’d like to leave you with –

*I saw a stranger yestere’en*

*I put food in the eating place,*

*drink in the drinking place,*

*and in the sacred name of the Triune*

*he blessed myself and my house*

*my cattle and my dear ones,*

*and the lark said in her song*

*often, often, often*

*goes the Christ in a stranger’s guise.*

Amen.

*In the Affirmation of Faith, let us share together the beliefs of the Church handed down to us through all the years – or you may prefer to sing the metrical version given at the end:*

   **We believe in God the Father,**

**from whom every family**

**in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,**

**who lives in our hearts through faith,**

**and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,**

**who strengthens us**

**with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;**

**Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

**Amen.**

*Wherever we are today, we come together in the Spirit as the body of Christ to join together in our prayers, using these words or your own:*

Heavenly Father, Jesus gave and received with equal freedom and love, so we pray that we may see and follow his example: as we are sent out to do your will and your work, may we be blessed with the grace to receive the hospitality and generosity of those we meet upon the way; and when we meet our brother or our sister, whoever she or he may be, may we greet them in your name and see your likeness in them, that serving them we may be serving you. Amen.

In a few moments of quiet, let us hold before God all those on our hearts in any kind of need, and thank Him too for those who are being good neighbours to us.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*We share the Covid-19 Prayer for all those suffering in any way from the virus:*

Keep us, good Lord,

under the shadow of your mercy.

Sustain and support the anxious,

be with those who care for the sick,

and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may find comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love

in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

*The Collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity:*

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 forever.

*We finish our prayers with the daily prayer that Jesus taught his friends as we say The Lord’s Prayer:*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

*We share the peace across our churches, our communities, our world:*

We are the body of Christ. In the one spirit we were all baptised into one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life. May the peace of the Lord be with us all.

*We finish our worship by blessing each other in the words of the Grace:*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen.

*After this service is read at the Rectory, Holy Communion will be celebrated; if you wish, you can share this through the Prayer of Spiritual Communion, which is for all of us in our homes:*

*Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, I ask you to come spiritually into my heart. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.*

*Here is a hymn to sing this week if you wish to; it is another setting of one of George Herbert’s poems called ‘The Elixir’ from his collection of poems called ‘The Temple’:*

Teach me, my God and King,

In all things Thee to see,

And what I do in anything

To do it as for Thee.

A man that looks on glass,

On it may stay his eye;

Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,

And then the heav'n espy.

All may of Thee partake:

Nothing can be so mean,

Which with his tincture—"for Thy sake"—

Will not grow bright and clean.

A servant with this clause

Makes drudgery divine:

Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,

Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone

That turneth all to gold;

For that which God doth touch and own

Cannot for less be told.

The Creed: *‘Hyfrydol’* (‘Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!’)

We believe in God the Father,

God almighty, by whose plan

earth and heaven sprang to being,

all created things began.

We believe in Christ the Saviour,

Son of God in human frame,

virgin-born, the child of Mary

upon whom the Spirit came.

Christ, who on the cross forsaken,

like a lamb to slaughter led,

suffered under Pontius Pilate,

he descended to the dead.

We believe in Jesus risen,

heaven’s king to rule and reign,

to the Father’s side ascended

till as judge he comes again.

We believe in God the Spirit;

in one Church, below, above:

saints of God in one communion,

one in holiness and love.

So by faith, our sins forgiven,

Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,

we shall rise with him in glory

to the life that knows no end.