

March Team St John, St Mary, St Peter, St Wendreda

3rd Sunday after Trinity 6th July

Regular Church Services

St Peter's Sundays 8am & 11am; Wednesdays 10am

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am; St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

Meditation

Naboth was at work in his vineyard, which adjoined the summer residence of King Ahab. "What an attractive vineyard you have, neighbour," said Ahab, who was walking on his estate. "I would very much like you to give me that vineyard; I want to make it into a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard elsewhere in exchange, or, if you prefer I will give you its value in silver."

A *vegetable garden*. Anyone who knows the Torah must immediately think of the land of Egypt, the land you 'must drench as a vegetable garden.' By contrast Canaan is a land 'which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land which God cares for.' In Israel's stories the promised land is often depicted as a *vineyard*, in which people see life as a gift from God. The *vegetable garden* stands for a land in which people have set up on their own account, independently of the heavenly owner. "Naboth I want to make your vineyard into a vegetable garden."

So that's what Ahab has been doing all these years! Exchanging Israel's God for Baal and taking people back to the paganism and slavery of Egypt. The question is what his neighbour Naboth, the Jezreelite, thinks about it. "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." Ahab is talking about a *vineyard*, and Naboth is talking about an *inheritance*. For hasn't the land been given to Israel by the Eternal One as an inheritance? And if that is the case, you can't do business with it. 'The land is mine, you are sojourners and guests on it.' Israel must remain faithful to the Eternal One and the inheritance of the fathers; it isn't to bow before Baal, the god of the land in which the strongest have power and the rich enrich themselves at the expense of the poor. 'Woe to him who adds field to field until there is no more room and he only has possessions in the land,' warns the prophet. In the midst of all those who collaborate with Baal, the Jezreelite, Naboth, remains faithful to the God of the fathers.

Ahab, offended by Naboth's refusal, goes home in a sulk to lie on his bed, his face to the wall. "What's the matter, Ahab, why are you so out of sorts, why don't you eat anything?" asks his queen Jezebel. "I asked Naboth the Jezreelite for his vineyard. I offered him a better vineyard in exchange, or a sum of money. But he said that he would not give up his vineyard."

Ahab is twisting Naboth's words; Naboth did not say that he didn't want to give up his vineyard, what he said was that he refused to part with his inheritance. The king, who must be the guardian of God's holy Torah, refuses to initiate his Phoenician wife into its mysteries. And she knows a great deal. Jezebel hears a quite reasonable proposal for an exchange or purchase. What's wrong with that? She regards Naboth's refusal as an unprecedented insult. She doesn't understand why Ahab is so downcast. He should have the rebellious peasant put to death immediately. "Ahab, who is really master in Israel? Get up and eat, cheer up, I will see to it that you get that vineyard."

The queen wrote letters in Ahab's name to the elders of Jezreel, instructing them to put their fellow townsman to death. She sealed the letters with the royal seal. A show trial was held, in which false witnesses declared under oath that Naboth had cursed God and king. *God and king*. For Jezebel there was no difference between blasphemy and lese-majesty! So corrupt was the justice of the land that Naboth was condemned to death with no reprieve. So a small holder fell victim to big capital. Jezebel came in person to report the good news. "Ahab, get up, Naboth the Jezreelite has been stoned; Naboth is dead; inherit the land he refused to give you for money."

Inherit the land. Words once spoken by the Eternal One, no, not to the rich but to the poor, to slaves, who had escaped from the tyranny of Egypt, and crossed the Jordan like down-and-outs. "Inherit the land." Those are the words that Jezebel speaks. On his high horse, Ahab went to Naboth's vineyard to inherit it. Jezebel waved him off. She had a strange husband king of a peculiar people, he had almost allowed himself to be bamboozled by a simple peasant who refused to understand that a request from a king amounted to an order. A good thing that she had intervened.

The word of the Eternal One came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Arise, go to Ahab the king of Israel. Look, he is in Naboth's vineyard in order to inherit it. Say to him: have you murdered and also inherited? Thus says the Lord. As the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, so too shall the dogs lick your blood!" Elijah arose and went. Look, there he is in Naboth's vineyard to give voice to a man whose voice has been silenced. Ahab recognises him, "have you found me, my enemy?" "I have found you, for you have sold yourself for what is evil in the eyes of the Lord and you have caused all Israel to sin. Thus

says the Lord: I shall bring doom upon you. I shall sweep away your descendants. I shall exterminate from your house all those who piss against the wall, and dogs will devour Jezebel on the walls of Jezreel.”

And it happened that when Ahab heard these words, he rent his garments. He sat there in sackcloth and ashes; he fasted, he did penance. God saw it. And the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before my face? Therefore I shall not make this evil come in his days. I shall make it come in the days of his son.” His inheritor.

Ahab met his death on the battlefield; his chariot dripped with blood and the dogs lapped it up. After Ahab was overthrown in a coup by Jehu, Jezebel tried to seduce him, but he ordered that she be thrown from the window of her palace, and when they came to collect her body they found only her skull and souls of her feet for the dogs had eaten the rest. Their son, Ahaziah died after falling ill and seeing a vision of the prophet Elijah.

Thus, the sorry story about the son of queen Jezebel is a mirror image of the joyful story about the son of the widow of Zarephath. Both women come from pagan Sidon, one a princess of good fortune, the other a needy widow. Both of their sons fall sick. Elijah goes *up* the stairs to an *upper* room with the sick boy from Zarephath, there to raise him from the *dead*, the boy will *come down* living according to the *word of the Lord*.

Elijah tells the king’s sick son who is in Samaria, has *fallen* from his *upper* room, that he will never *come down alive* from the bed he *went up into*; he will find *death* there, according to the *word of the Lord*.

The woman from Zarephath saved the prophet’s life; Jezebel hounded the prophets to death.

Prayers

O be joyful in the Lord all the earth:
serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song.
Know that the Lord is God: it is he who has made us and we are his;
we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise:
give thanks to him and bless his name.
For the Lord is gracious; his steadfast love is everlasting:
and his faithfulness endures from generation to generation.

In the midst of hunger and war
We celebrate the promise of plenty and peace,
In the midst of oppression and tyranny
We celebrate the promise of service and freedom,
In the midst of doubt and despair
We celebrate the promise of faith and hope,
In the midst of fear and betrayal
We celebrate the promise of joy and loyalty,
In the midst of hatred and death
We celebrate the promise of love and life,
In the midst of sin and decay
We celebrate the promise of salvation and renewal,
In the midst of death on every side
We celebrate the promise of the Living Christ.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, and Blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you this day and for evermore. Amen.

Next Saturday 12th July

Bacon Butty Festival

at St Peter's 9.30-11.30

Raffle prizes, volunteers help etc needed

All Welcome to enjoy the best butties ever!

Regular Church Activities at St Peter's

Tuesday

10am-12noon Knit and Natter;

1st St Peter's MU 2.30-4pm 3rd Deanery MU

Wednesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

1st Study Group 7.30-9pm ***Next Aug 6th***

THIS WEEK Christian Aid Lunch Hall 12-1pm

Next **First Thursday** 4th September, June Jackson
on her work in the Prison Service.

No August meeting.

St John's Church Activities

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

9.15-11.15 St John's Tots;

Tuesday

10am Midweek Communion Service

2nd Study Group 11-12 ***Next THIS WEEK July 8th***

Study Group 7pm-8.30pm; Film The Chosen

Wednesdays

Thursday 1st Thursday Social Group (see above)

Friday Choir Practice in Church 7pm

Fenland Churches Celebration

Tues 22nd July 6.15-8.15 at Centenary Baptist
Hear from civic and health leaders, see the faith-
based social action mapping, explore working
together to support people across Fenland

Saturday 6th Sept – Quiet day at St Mary's

Led by Mother Jane

Volunteers are urgently needed for the

Community Hub run by Anna Godfrey through
Cambridgeshire Acre. Wednesdays 12:30 to 2:30 in
St John's Hall. Please see Anna for details.

Wednesday 27th August

Christian Aid Garden Party

2-4pm at the Rectory

All Welcome

Summer & Autumn Events

Sat 26th July 1pm Bar-B-Q at Ruth & James

Thu 14th Aug St John Toddlers Beach Party.

Sat 30th August Model Railway Exhibition

Sat 13th Sept CMS Concert at St Peter's

Sat 13th Sept "Ride and Stride" Walk.Cycle etc

**Sun 14th Sept Musical afternoon St John's Choir
at 129 West End – Refreshments and Raffle**

Sat 20th Sept St John's Autumn Fair

Sat 27th Sept Lions at St Peters

Sun 12th Oct 1 for 1.30 Harvest Lunch at Maureen's

Sat 18th Oct Bondi Concert 7pm St John's

3rd Sunday after Trinity 6th July

***Welcome to St John the Evangelist,
St Peter & St Mary Churches in the
March Team***

Regular Sunday Services

St John 9.30am Sung Communion

THIS WEEK First Sunday of each Month 9.30am

Wholeness Service with Laying on of Hands

Monthly MESSY CHURCH 1-3pm

Next July 20th, none in August

St Mary 9.15am Traditional Sung Communion

St Peter 8am Holy Communion

11am Sung Communion

*Last Sunday of each month, **Sunday Club***

*The next sessions will be on 27th July at the later time of
11am and we plan to come into church for communion.*

There will be no session in August (31st).

TUESDAY St John's; 10am Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY St Peter's; 10am Holy Communion

Zoom services

Sunday 5.15pm Team Service

Thursday 8.30am Morning Prayer

Team Rector: Rev Andrew Smith 01354 572117

andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

*All enquiries about Weddings Baptisms etc to Andrew
Baptisms; 12.30 St Peter; 2pm or later St John St Mary*

Team Leader in Mission Ruth Clay 07905950849

RevRuth.marchchurches@outlook.com

Clergy; Jane Rees 463284, Anthony Chandler 652894,

Jenny Webb 650855, Mother Jane Dicker 661099

Readers; Hannah Taylor 661712, Diane Wise 651512.

Karen Pritchard karen.marchchurches@outlook.com

Next Sunday, July 13th, 4th Sunday after Trinity

1 Kings 19 v1-15a, Luke 10 v25-37

Baptisms at St John's 2pm & 3pm

WEDDINGS

Saturday 12th July

25th Anniversary 2pm St Mary's

Mark & Caroline Walton

3.30pm St John's

Vernon Clinch & Odette Lesk

FUNERALS

Fri 18th 12.30pm St Mary's; Susan Watson

Latest WINDOWS Magazine now available

Thanks to Editor Alan and the contributors.

*Andrew circulates a **Weekly Meditation** via email
(homedeliveries are available for those without email)*

If you would like to receive this, please contact

andrew.marchurch@gmail.com or 01354 572117

Prayers, Collect, for this week

Boundless, O God, is your saving power; your harvest reaches to the ends of the earth. Fill our hearts with zeal for your kingdom and place on our lips the tidings of peace. Grant us perseverance as heralds of the gospel and joy as disciples of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Old Testament 1 Kings 21 v1b-21a

Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel beside the palace of King Ahab of Samaria. And Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house; I will give you a better vineyard for it, or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its value in money." But Naboth said to Ahab, "The Lord forbid that I should give you my ancestral inheritance." Ahab went home resentful and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he had said, "I will not give you my ancestral inheritance." He lay down on his bed, turned away his face, and would not eat.

His wife Jezebel came to him and said, "Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?" He said to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for money, or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard for it,' but he answered, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" His wife Jezebel said to him, "Do you now govern Israel? Get up, eat some food, and be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal; she sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who lived with Naboth in his city. She wrote in the letters, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the assembly; seat two scoundrels opposite him, and have them bring a charge against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' Then take him out and stone him to death." The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them. Just as it was written in the letters that she had sent to them, they proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the assembly. The two scoundrels came in and sat opposite him, and the scoundrels brought a charge against Naboth in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth cursed God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead."

As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive but dead." As soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab set out to go

down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. You shall say to him: Thus says the Lord: Have you killed and also taken possession? You shall say to him: Thus says the Lord: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood." Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel."

Gospel of Luke 10 v1-11 & 16-20

The Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house!" And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the labourer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, "Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near."

'Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.'

The seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!' He said to them, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'

Prayer after Communion

God, whose kingdom comes impossibly near: share with us the authority that sets others free; send us on the way of challenge and conversion; reveal to us the vision of hatred falling from its throne in summer lightning storms; through Jesus Christ, who empowers us. **Amen.**