

THE COLLECTS

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified: hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people, that in their vocation and ministry they may serve you in holiness and truth to the glory of your name; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Almighty God, send down upon your Church the riches of your Spirit, and kindle in all who minister the gospel your countless gifts of grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

BIBLE READINGS

Genesis 24.34–38, 42–49, 58–67

So he said, 'I am Abraham's servant. ³⁵The Lord has greatly blessed my master, and he has become wealthy; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female slaves, camels and donkeys. ³⁶And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷My master made me swear, saying, "You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live; ³⁸but you shall go to my father's house, to my kindred, and get a wife for my son." ⁴²I came today to the spring, and said, "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now you will only make successful the way I am going! ⁴³I am standing here by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, 'Please give me a little water from your jar to drink,' ⁴⁴and who will say to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels also'—let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son." ⁴⁵Before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah coming out with her water-jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, "Please let me drink." ⁴⁶She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, "Drink, and I will also water your camels." So I drank, and she also watered the camels. ⁴⁷Then I asked her, "Whose daughter are you?" She said, "The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him." So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. ⁴⁸Then I bowed my head and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to obtain the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. ⁴⁹Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so that I may turn either to the right hand or to the left.' ⁵⁸And they called Rebekah, and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' She said, 'I will.' ⁵⁹So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes.' ⁶¹Then Rebekah and

her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. ⁶²Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. ⁶³Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. ⁶⁴And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, ⁶⁵and said to the servant, 'Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?' The servant said, 'It is my master.' So she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Romans 7.15–25a

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

Matthew 11.16–19, 25–end

'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another, ¹⁷"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn." ¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.' ²⁵At that time Jesus said, 'I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ²⁸'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

Post Communion

Grant, O Lord, we beseech you, that the course of this world may be so peaceably ordered by your governance, that your Church may joyfully serve you in all godly quietness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FOR YOUR PRAYERS:

Heavenly Father, we pray for your Church throughout the world. Grant that we may approach you with the openness and trust of children, willing to listen for your voice and eager to share your love. Bless all who minister in your name, and strengthen us to be faithful witnesses in our daily lives.

We pray for our communities as many gather this weekend for village events and summer celebrations. We give thanks for all who give their time so generously to organise, serve and care for others. Bless the work of every volunteer, and help our villages to be places of welcome, kindness and friendship, where all may know they belong.

We pray especially today for Albina and Melissa as they are confirmed. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon them, strengthen them in faith, fill them with joy, and guide them in the years ahead. May they continue to grow in the knowledge of your love and find encouragement in the fellowship of your Church. We pray too for their families, friends and sponsors who have supported them on their journey.

We pray for those whose lives feel burdened by worry, illness, grief or loneliness. May they hear Christ's invitation to come to him and find rest. We remember before you those known personally to us. Surround them with your healing presence, your peace and your love.

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died, especially those we have loved and those whose anniversaries fall at this time. May they rest in your eternal peace, and may those who mourn know the comfort of your promises.

Father, help us to recognise your presence in the ordinary moments of our lives, to serve one another with joyful hearts, and to trust that even the smallest acts of kindness can reveal your kingdom.

Amen

Views from the Pews: Jen's Lens

I've just realised that I've been writing *Jen's Lens* for a whole year! My first proper reflection (after the one I wrote as a thank you for Mel's leaving service) was for the Stadhampton Village Fête weekend, which is once again taking place this coming Saturday. So, for fifty-two (or thereabouts!) editions, you have graciously put up with stories from my hectic life and the occasional reflection on scripture. For that, I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Like many people who take on something new, I've definitely suffered from imposter syndrome. I've often wondered whether I've written enough about the Bible and not too much about everyday life. Then I remember that Jesus spent so much of his time talking about ordinary things: meals, farming, weddings, families, fishing and children. Faith isn't something

that belongs only inside church on a Sunday morning; it's found in village fêtes, hurried weeks, conversations over coffee and the unexpected moments that make us stop and think.

It still amazes me how directly scripture speaks into our lives today, despite being written in such a different time and culture. Human nature, it seems, hasn't changed very much. Anyone who has ever sat on a committee knows that you can't please everyone, and this Sunday's Gospel makes exactly that point. Jesus sounds almost exasperated. Whatever John the Baptist did, people criticised him. Whatever Jesus did, people criticised him too. John was too serious; Jesus was too sociable. Some people had already decided they weren't going to listen, no matter what was said or done.

I wonder how often we fall into the same trap. It's so easy to focus on what's wrong that we miss the good right in front of us. We become expert critics rather than grateful recipients of what God is already doing.

With all the hustle and bustle that events like the village fête bring, it's worth taking a moment to remember who and what we are doing them for. When life is already busy, adding one more thing to our plates can make it easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. Jesus ends this passage by thanking his Father because the kingdom is revealed not to those who think they have everything worked out, but to those who come with the openness and trust of children. Perhaps that's what our communities need most—not people with all the answers, but people who simply turn up, lend a hand, share a laugh and enjoy being together. Maybe that's one small glimpse of the kingdom of heaven.

Looking back over this past year, I've realised that perhaps I've been asking myself the wrong question. Instead of wondering whether I'd written enough about the Bible, I should have remembered that the Bible is full of ordinary people trying to be faithful in ordinary lives. That's where God meets us. As I wrote this time last year, however you show up for your family, friends and community, it embodies something beautiful and holy. I believe that because I've seen it over and over again—in volunteers who quietly get on with the job, in neighbours who look out for one another, in friends who know just when to call, and in people who keep turning up, even when life is busy and complicated. Those things may not make headlines, but to me they look remarkably like the kingdom of God.

So, thank you for reading *Jen's Lens* over the past year. Whether you've agreed with every word or quietly rolled your eyes, thank you for coming along for the journey. I hope that together we can continue to notice God in the ordinary moments of life and see the world with the openness that Jesus encourages in us.

I wish you all a wonderful week ahead.

Jen

UPCOMING SERVICES

SUNDAY 5TH JULY

5TH AFTER TRINITY

DORCHESTER ABBEY – 10:30AM CONFIRMATION SERVICE

WARBOROUGH – 11:00AM MORNING WORSHIP

WARBOROUGH – 6:00PM HOLY COMMUNION BCP

SUNDAY 12TH JULY

6TH AFTER TRINITY

STADHAMPTON – 9:30AM PARISH EUCHARIST

WARBOROUGH – 11:00AM PARISH EUCHARIST

SUNDAY 19TH JULY

7TH AFTER TRINITY

STADHAMPTON – 9:30AM FAMILY EUCHARIST

WARBOROUGH – 11:00AM PARISH EUCHARIST

SUNDAY 26TH JULY

8TH AFTER TRINITY

WARBOROUGH – 8:00AM HOLY COMMUNION BCP

STADHAMPTON – 4:30PM CLUSTER EVENSONG

SUNDAY 2ND AUGUST

9TH AFTER TRINITY

STADHAMPTON – 9:30AM FAMILY SERVICE

WARBOROUGH – 11:00AM PARISH EUCHARIST

NOTICES

Admitting Children to Communion

Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.' And he laid his hands on them and went on his way. (Matthew 19:14-15)

The Gospels show us again and again that Jesus warmly welcomed children and valued them deeply. Over the coming months, I will be running preparation sessions for the Admission of Children to Communion. Rebecca Nye, a child psychologist, writes that children have 'the spiritual advantage of an acutely sensitive capacity for non-verbal communication and insight'. If this is something you would like to consider for your child or children, please do have a chat with me, or get in touch by email or phone: revemmafirth@gmail.com, 07498 762485.