



**Sunday, 30 August, 2020**  
**Trinity 12**

All being well – that is, if we don't go into a second lockdown – this will be the last of the weekly pew sheets. I know, from messages received, how much these have been appreciated and on behalf of all of us, I say a huge thank you to Gordon, Colin, Graham, Rob, Chris, Philip, Joy, Nigel and Maureen, who have been helping with the delivering and other aspects of what has been a very challenging time.

For those of you who are unable to get to the church services, Phil and I will produce something to ensure you remain in touch with what's going on.

Talking of things going on, please see the notices at the end of this bulletin, for details of a very busy weekend at the end of September.

Best wishes,

*Sarah.*

## Collect and readings for the Twelfth Sunday of Trinity

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you are always more ready to hear than we to pray,  
and to give more than either we desire or deserve;  
pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy,  
forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid  
and giving us those good things  
which we are not worthy to ask  
but through the merits and mediation of 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.

***First Reading (Jeremiah 15:15-21)***

O LORD, you know;  
remember me and visit me,  
and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors.  
In your forbearance do not take me away;  
know that on your account I suffer insult.  
Your words were found, and I ate them,  
and your words became to me a joy  
and the delight of my heart;  
for I am called by your name,  
O LORD, God of hosts. I did not sit in the company of  
merrymakers,  
nor did I rejoice;

***Second Reading (Romans 12:9-21)***

under the weight of your hand I sat alone,  
for you had filled me with indignation. Why is my pain  
unceasing,

my wound incurable,  
refusing to be healed?

Truly, you are to me like a deceitful brook,  
like waters that fail.

Therefore thus says the LORD:

If you turn back, I will take you back,  
and you shall stand before me.

If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless,  
you shall serve as my mouth.

It is they who will turn to you,  
not you who will turn to them.

And I will make you to this people  
a fortified wall of bronze;

they will fight against you,  
but they shall not prevail over you,

for I am with you

to save you and deliver you,

says the LORD. I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked,  
and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### ***Gospel Reading (Matthew 16:21-28)***

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

"For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

### **Reflection for the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity (Doug Chaplin).**

I don't know if you've come across the Alexander McCall Smith No1 Ladies Detective Agency stories – the books are rather better than the attempted TV adaptation. Mma Ramotswe, the heroine and founder of the said detective agency, describes herself, euphemistically, as "traditionally built".

"Mma Ramotswe sighed. 'We are all tempted, Mma. We are all tempted when it comes to cake.'

That is true,' said Mma Potokwane sadly. 'There are many temptations in this life, but cake is probably one of the biggest of them.'"

Cake is a relatively harmless temptation, and the more harmful ones are those we're less likely to talk about, but today's gospel reading has both an unexpected tempter and a different kind of temptation.

If you were following the readings last week, you'll know that last Sunday's gospel left St Peter on a high note: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt 16:18-19)

Even if Peter wasn't a good Roman Catholic, with visions of 2000 years of the papacy stretching ahead of him, that's still a pretty amazing promise. You can understand why he might have his head full of notions of glory and triumph, power and success. Peter is going to be one of God's winners.

Perhaps, as we move on from last week's readings to this week's, our Old Testament verses should have come from Proverbs 16 rather than Jeremiah. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov 16:15) Because today, Jesus brings Peter down in the harshest way possible.

Instead of talking about triumph and glory, Jesus begins to talk about suffering, death and defeat. "Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." I suspect that Peter was so shocked by the first half of that sentence that he didn't really hear the end. All he fastened on were phrases like "undergo great suffering" or "be killed."

His mind still whirling with the promise of glory and power, he can react in only one way; impulsively – and Peter was nothing if not impulsive – he blurts out "No way, Master, never, not to you." Jesus is just as vehement in response: "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matt 16:23) Calling Peter the Prince of Darkness just after he's made him the Keeper of the Keys is to show both Peter and Jesus on an emotional rollercoaster.

That Jesus actually calls Peter "Satan" shows us, I think, of how acutely Jesus was aware of his temptation: to avoid his calling as Son of Man and Son of God, to look for a route other than the way of the cross. We see it near the beginning of the gospel, in the temptations in the desert. We see it near the end of the gospel when Jesus prays in Gethsemane: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me." (Matt 26:39). And we see it

here, when Peter's desire to protect Jesus from this leads Jesus to tell him he, Peter, is doing the devil's work.

All too often, the church seems to want to protect God, defend Jesus. In practice, that often means defending itself, and its power. That's what, for example, blasphemy laws and heresy trials were all about. It's not just a Christian thing. Most people want to protect what's precious to them, and whether it's Muslims defending insults against Mohammed, or atheists defending their totally free choice by labelling a religious upbringing as a form of child abuse.

Peter has to learn that the power he is given is not the power to protect Christ. Jesus neither wants nor needs Peter's or the church's protection. Indeed, when Peter tries to say he will stop Jesus being harmed, he is doing the devil's work: only Jesus laying down his life will bring the love and life of God into the darkness of death.

As the Church of England works out what it means to be a minority church in a secular and pluralist culture, it's awfully tempting to try to want to hold on to power, to status, to the privileges of establishment, and believe that defending our heritage is in some way protecting God, or standing up for Jesus. It's hard for the church to want to be as vulnerable as Jesus was willing to be, hard for the church to follow where Jesus goes.

Peter's temptation – so apparently virtuous that he doesn't even recognise it as a temptation – is to go for glory and save Jesus. Cake – chocolate cake, beefcake or cheesecake. according to preference – is not the biggest temptation in life. Trying to

cling to the power and illusion of protecting God – that was Peter’s big temptation, and perhaps it’s the church’s too.

### **Questions for reflection**

If you can put yourself into the gospel story, do you think you’d have said the same as Peter?

How do you think Peter reacted to being called “Satan” by Jesus? Confusion, hurt, willingness to change?

Can you think of ways the church tries to defend the faith or protect God, which are actually about trying to hold on to honour, privilege and power?

### **Notices**

#### **St David’s Fundraising Event.**

On Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup> a table sale will be held outside St David’s Church from 10.00am until 2.00pm. A selection of books, games, puzzles and cakes will be amongst the things for sale on a donations only basis. Alongside this we will be running a “virtual” raffle. Tickets will not be given but for 50p a time you can have your name entered in the draw. Please contact Sarah to tell her how many entries you would like. With first and second prizes of £50 and £25 respectively, why not treat yourself to several tries?

From September 1<sup>st</sup>, you can also buy our Treasure Hunt Sheet. With clues around St John’s, the city centre and the Comer

Gardens area, follow the trail, answer the questions and be in with a chance to win the treasure!

Entrance forms can be obtained from Sarah and all entries must be returned by the end of the sale on September 26<sup>th</sup>

#### **St Clement’s Friends’ AGM**

Also on Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, St Clement’s Friends hold their AGM in church at 11.00

#### **Masks**

From Saturday 8 August, it has become a legal requirement to wear face coverings in places of worship. Church of England guidelines state that:

Face coverings (that is a mask or something which covers the mouth and nose) must be worn in church, both during services and when entering for private prayer.

There are certain exemptions, including for children under the age of 11 and those with certain medical conditions.

Those leading services do not need to wear face masks to do so as long as they can be appropriately distanced (which is possible in all four of our churches). However, the masks do need to be worn by the priest for the distribution of communion.

Masks can be removed for the purposes of reading a lesson, doing intercessions and other activities where it is necessary for communication. They can also be removed to receive communion.

The full draft document is available on the Church of England website and via a link on our websites.