



March Team Ministry

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

Welcome

Second Sunday after Christmas ~ January 3rd 2021

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 279232 or at andrew.marchurch@gmail.com

We have Church services with social distancing, and also, for the foreseeable future, our zooming, emailing and leaflet deliveries. We want people to have a genuine choice. We are also trying to allow other aspects of the church's life to happen. Ideas and suggestions welcome.

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

St Mary's Sundays 9.15am

St John's Sundays 9.30am; Tuesdays 10am

"Stay in touch, take care, keep safe, continue praying and God bless."

Prayers for this Week

Lord God of the nations, we have seen the star of your glory rising in splendour. The radiance of your incarnate Word pierces the darkness that covers the earth and signals the dawn of peace and justice. Make radiant the lives of your people with that same brightness, and beckons all nations to walk as one in your light. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, in the splendour of eternal light, One God for ever and ever.

Amen

Shepherd of Israel and Light of the Nations, made known in the gifts of those who call to other names and walk on different ways: may unjust powers and the hatreds within us be dismayed by your friendship and dethroned by your love; through Jesus Christ, the open arms of grace.

Amen

Psalm 72: 1-7 & 10-14

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

Gospel of St Matthew 2 v1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Meditation

The wise men brought three gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh; and I am sure you have heard on other occasions of their significance. There are three actions that priests are ordained to do as an expression of the ministerial priesthood within the priesthood of all believers; celebrate communion, and pronounce absolution, and give God's blessing. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians, spoke of three great virtues, faith, hope and love.

Because, over this strange Christmastime, I have been thinking of the future, the church and vocation, this meditation will reflect on these threesomes. It will make connections thus;

- 1. gold – blessing - hope;**
- 2. frankincense – communion – love;**
- 3. myrrh – absolution – faith.**

In a way, all are gifts we offer to God, and gifts we receive from God.

Frankincense – Communion – Love

One good answer to the question, "What are we created for?" or "What is life all about?" that Christians give is, "We are here to worship". Worship can be seen as the main purpose of human life that Christianity gives us. We do of course worship God in many ways, I am not just talking about church services. We worship God by reflecting his glory in many ways, through our ingenuity, creativity, work, relationships, and as Jesus taught us to pray, by building up God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Worship may well be one of the things that distinguishes humanity from other species; we are made in God's image - we reflect his glory – we worship. It seems all species seek to survive, all species seek to perpetuate their genes, all species seek their niche in the environment for survival; religion, worship swims against that tide of the survival of the fittest and brings beauty, altruism, and love into the forefront. So the first answer "worship" to, "What are we created for?" or "What is life all about?" is just as well answered by "love". We are created by love, through love, for love, in love and to receive and give love. In Communion, the bread and the wine become for us the body and blood of Christ, and as we receive it we become his broken body and his blood which is shed for the redemption of creation. Known also as

Eucharist or Mass, which in English are “thanksgiving” and “sending out”, it is the Lord’s Supper, given for us, and we are asked to do this in remembrance of and in re-membering Christ, to represent and re-present Christ by receiving and sharing him in his world. In communion, in worship, and in love we are united with God, Father Son and Holy Spirit

Myrrh – Absolution – Faith

Myrrh, you may often have heard, is associated with anointing a corpse at death. Christ’s death is associated with the redemption of the world, for Christ announcing and pronouncing that by his death on the cross death, evil and sin have no more dominion. Death, evil and sin still exist, still have power even, but they no longer define or control humanity or creation. Christ’s death opens the door to Resurrection, to New Life; the old order has passed away, the new has arrived.

Absolution, the forgiveness pronounced and announced by a priest so often after our corporate or individual confession, enables the turning round and fresh starts to be made, relationships to be healed, and reconciliation to be developed. The hurt is still there, the scars remain, the damage was done, but new growth, new steps, new possibilities can happen.

Faith, not so much facts we may believe, or creeds we sign up to, but an attitude of integrity; faithfulness – seeing things through – not abandoning – persistence and accompaniment. Faith, more that God believes in us, and so we can respond by striving to have faith in Him.

Gold – Blessing - Hope

Gold, a gift for a King, but this is a different sort of King, a servant King who empties himself, suffers and serves, and who brings in that different Kingdom. Blessing is not just a formula to let you know we have come to the end of a church service; it is not just a farewell or goodnight greeting. It is the plea to transform something or someone for good. So, when we bless someone, we seek to see the best in them, nurture the best in them, transform the hurts and blemishes into something positive and worthwhile. Similarly, when we bless objects, we seek to use them for the common good; blessing is about building up, reinforcing, and making the best of. And that bringing out the best is the real ingredient or real hope.

Paul may have said in his context, “and the greatest of these is love”, but in our current covid context, it seems to me that the greatest need today is Hope, and we build hope by seeing the best, making the best, transforming into the best, in other words, by living a life now of transforming by blessing.

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To end, paraphrasing and responding to our Gospel today; the magi saw the child Jesus; and they knelt down and worshipped. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and they returned by another way.

May we worship Christ, know his forgiveness so we can live his risen life, have his blessing to share, open our inner treasure chests with these gifts of great value and significance, and walk on in another way.

God bless, Andrew
