



March Team Ministry

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

Welcome

4th Sunday after Trinity ~ 27th June 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 will continue to act to give safety and confidence. Services with Social Distancing

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

God of the living, in whose image we have been formed with imperishable life as our destiny, dispel from your people the fear of death and awaken within us the faith that saves. Bid us rise from the death of sin to take our place in the new creation. We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, with the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of inclusive love, who knows us each by name: we thank you for the woman, who stood out of the crowd and defied her uncleanness to connect with you; we praise you for the leader of the synagogue, who faced the mockery of others to give his daughter hope; may the flowing power of Christ bring healing and acceptance to the rejected and abused; through Jesus Christ, giver of life. Amen.

2 Samuel 1 v17-27

After the death of Saul, when David had returned from defeating the Amalekites David remained two days in Ziklag. David intoned this lamentation over Saul and his son Jonathan. (He ordered that The Song of the Bow be taught to the people of Judah; it is written in the Book of Jashar.) He said: Your glory, O Israel, lies slain upon your high places! How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon; or the daughters of the Philistines will rejoice, the daughters of the uncircumcised will exult. You mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew or rain upon you, nor bounteous fields! For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, anointed with oil no more. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, nor the sword of Saul return empty. Saul and Jonathan, beloved and lovely! In life and in death they were not divided; they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you with crimson, in luxury, who put ornaments of gold on your apparel. How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle! Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

Gospel of St Mark 5 v21-43

When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered round him; and he was by the lake. Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.' So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years. She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.' Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?' And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, "Who touched me?"' He looked all round to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Meditation

How are the mighty fallen! After last week's reading, where we probably cheered with David over his victory over Goliath and the Philistines, we now have the sting of warfare; the death of people who are loved. The war continues despite David's victories; now in a large battle not only have the Philistines won, they have also killed both King Saul and his heir Jonathan. We have missed out on the readings where the relationship between David and Jonathan has been explored. It may be seen by others that David and Jonathan must be rivals; for Jonathan is the natural heir to his father King Saul, and David, through Samuel's anointing, is his usurper. Today's reading points to the acknowledgement in scripture of David's real grief for, and love of Jonathan. The nature of this relationship today is understood in differing ways, and at times ways that lead to significant controversy.

A straightforward reading seems to indicate a close and intimate relationship between these two men, but we cannot draw a simple straight line from their relationship to what we feel about same-sex relationships today. David does go on to get married several times, and have many children, as was expected of a monarch then. But, we do also acknowledge that these relationships are not straightforward or happy. His first wife is Saul's daughter, therefore either Jonathan's sister or step-sister, and we will hear more about the underhand and even murderous way in which he acquires his last wife. Maybe, if his love for Jonathan had not been tragically cut short, so that the love that was perhaps natural for him was exchanged for that which was un-natural to him, we would not hear of his subsequent tragic and dysfunctional family which left so many damaged people.

We have headlines about a New Zealand weightlifter, Laurel Hubbard, who may be selected for the Olympics. Laurel has transitioned, and it has provoked debate about many things, not only fairness in sport. We also have a government proposal to ban "conversion therapies". I have long heard the call that God chooses to make some people same-sex attracted. Gender transitioning challenges this, as it may be saying either God makes mistakes or that gender is a human choice not a divine construct. But, before I go any further, I remind myself, that I simply have not known many trans-gendered people. For back in April, I wrote of the guiding principles of Living in Love and Faith, which is the Church of England's discussion process for looking at issues of gender, sexual attraction and related issues. These principles are;

“ to Address IGNORANCE, by learning together about identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage in the light of our call to be faithful to both Scripture and the Church's tradition; by learning together with people who have different perspectives and lived experiences in relation to identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

to Acknowledge PREJUDICE, by welcoming people as they are, loving them unconditionally and seeking to see Christ in them; by reflecting deeply on our attitudes and behaviour in order to nurture understanding and respect between people who disagree.

to Admit HYPOCRISY, by not condemning certain behaviours and attitudes while turning a blind eye to others, remembering that we are all weak, fallible, broken, and equally in need of God's grace; by learning from one another about the challenge to holy living and the wideness of God's mercy as the Spirit moves within, among and between us.

to Cast out FEAR, by consciously demonstrating and living out what it means for perfect love to cast out fear even in situations of disagreement; by modelling openness and vulnerability as each of us wrestles prayerfully with the costliness of Christian discipleship.

to Speak into SILENCE, by remembering that we are the body of Christ, called to relate deeply and openly with one another, sharing what is on our hearts as well as in our minds; by practising deep listening, without a hidden agenda, that encourages conversations about human identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage.

to Pay attention to POWER, by being alert to attempts to control others, remembering that God's Spirit alone can bring transformation into our lives and the lives of others; by following Christ's example of service and compassion as we accompany one another in following the way of the cross."

So I need to listen, pray and learn more. So, as well as the love expressed in our Old Testament reading, and the questions it raises, our Gospel also sheds light. Contrast the woman, the ostracised woman, with an embarrassing complaint, who is both healed and exposed publically because of her faith; with Jairus' daughter, who is discreetly and privately healed, because of her Dad's faltering faith. In this gospel reading; who is listened to, who is ignored? What assumptions do we make? Who does Jesus welcome, and where is he welcomed? Where and how is love expressed?

What would Jesus do? What would Jesus have us, his disciples, do? Can we see God in Jonathan and David's love and grief? How comfortable are we with Jesus as the 'Son of David'? What does our love and grief point us too? How do we allow what we learn of other's love and grief to learn of God?

(PS For any who are interested, I have been writing this listening to perhaps the greatest love-music ever – Act III of Wagner's Tristan and Isolde !)

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

Encouraged by our fellowship with all the saints, let us make our prayers through our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, your Son called men and women to leave the past behind them and to follow him as his disciples in the way of the cross. Look with mercy upon those whom he calls today, marks with the cross and makes disciples within his church.....

Your Son told his disciples not to be afraid and at Easter breathed on them his gift of peace. Look with mercy upon the world into which he sent them out and give it that peace for which it longs.....

Your Son formed around him a company who were no longer servants but friends, and invited all to be his brother and sister and mother. Look with mercy upon our families and our friends and upon the communities in which we share.....

Your Son sent out disciples to heal the sick. Look with mercy on those who yearn to hear the good news of salvation, and renew among your people the gifts of compassion and care.....

Your Son promised to those who followed him that they would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel and would share the banquet of his kingdom. According to your promise, look with mercy on those who walked with Christ in this life and have now passed through death.....

Almighty God, at this time when we recall Saints Peter and Paul, you have built your Church upon the foundation of apostles, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone: that in unity and peace we may proclaim one truth and follow one Lord, your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever. Amen.