



March Team Ministry

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

Welcome

8th Sunday after Trinity ~ 25th July 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 are keeping services much the same; staying away if ill, wearing masks, washing hands and respecting distance. We have congregational singing for those wearing masks. We continue to keep people safe and to feel safe.

~ 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

O God, you open wide your hand, giving us food in due season. Out of your never-failing abundance, satisfy the hungers of body and soul and lead all peoples of the earth to the feast of the world to come. We pray this through Jesus Christ, your Son, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of true abundance, in whom nothing is lost and all are fed: liberate us from meagre rations of scarce and grudging love for which we must compete; show us another kingdom which stills our all-consuming fear and fills us with new hope; through Jesus Christ, the peace of creation. Amen.

2 Samuel 11 v1-15

In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, David sent Joab with his officers and all Israel with him; they ravaged the Ammonites, and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David rose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful. David sent someone to inquire about the woman. It was reported, 'This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite.' So David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant.'

So David sent word to Joab, 'Send me Uriah the Hittite.' And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab and the people fared, and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, 'Go down to your house, and wash your feet.' Uriah went out of the king's house, and there followed him a present from the king. But Uriah slept at the entrance of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. When they told David, 'Uriah did not go down to his house', David said to Uriah, 'You have just come

from a journey. Why did you not go down to your house?' Uriah said to David, 'The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing.' Then David said to Uriah, 'Remain here today also, and tomorrow I will send you back.' So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day. On the next day, David invited him to eat and drink in his presence and made him drunk; and in the evening he went out to lie on his couch with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, 'Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die.'

Gospel of St John 6 v1-21

Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was near. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, 'Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?' He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, 'Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little.' One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, 'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?' Jesus said, 'Make the people sit down.' Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, 'Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.' So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, 'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'

When Jesus realized that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.

When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them. The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat, and they were terrified. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.' Then they wanted to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

Meditation

The feeding of the 5000 is one of the few events that is recorded in all four gospels. It occurs out of necessity or circumstance not as a result of planning or intention. Jesus wants to have a time of isolation for reflection and prayer, partly on his own and partly with his disciples, but a large, and then hungry crowd join him, and then we get the rest of the story with its events, significance and theology. Jesus wanted to go on retreat.

RETREAT. The most common use of this word is not a positive. Armies retreat when they have been defeated, or possibly as a tactic to buy time to regroup. In church circles to go on retreat is to find some time and a place to pray, think, possibly silent, possibly in the company of others. We may choose to use it more to look backwards or forwards, to explore our inward selves, or our outward relationships; it may be very work focussed or more about our personal agenda. Over the years I have gone on many retreats, but not since covid, and I and others may be more in need of it than ever.

Re- before a word tends to mean "again" but what about the "treat" bit. A treat is something special, something enjoyable. For the last months we seem either to have had few treats, or we have lowered our expectations of what counts as a treat. I have said that the last 17 months have been a bit like we have the cake, but no icing on it. I encourage all of you to find a way to have some treats over the summer.

RECREATION. What does recreation mean to you? What are your recreational activities? Sport or exercise, dancing or knitting, painting or crosswords. We all have activities that we enjoy, fill our time and some perhaps also enable us to socialise. But again, leaving aside the re- and focussing on the creation bit. We affirm God as one who creates. Not just a creator at the beginning of time, but a God who continues to create, whose very nature is to be the creator. We have seen on our news stories the effects of humanity not caring for creation with the

extreme weather and the tragic consequences of that. We also know, but all too often try to ignore, the hidden effects of our squandering of natural resources, and I hope the shock of the covid pandemic and the interruption to our lifestyles will help us concentrate on living more sustainable lifestyles. We also affirm that all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. So, as we hear of prejudice and tension between people who see themselves as different, if we are to engage in recreation, we need to examine our own attitudes and actions both as individuals and as institutions of communal life. To be involved in creation is to build things up, to be involved in recreation is take those things, and those people, who are battered, crushed, or damaged and raise them up. So I encourage you to have some recreation and re-creation to build up yourself and to build up others so that we may be more able to be the people we are created by God to be.

REVISION. This is associated for me with late teenage years and exams. Ploughing through the almost illegible notes I had taken so as to be able to answer questions in the hot house of tests. And knowing that how I did in those tests would make a difference to what my future would turn out to be, at least for the next stage of life. Yes, even after all these years, some things are remembered and have been used, others have long since passed from my memory and ceased to be of use, although there are the extraordinary triggers which bring long lost information or ideas back into my brain. But again, lets move on from the re-, again, to the vision. Professionally, much of my vision for ministry in March has been battered, delayed, and challenged by covid, and so needs to be looked at again. I have returned to some of the roots of what it is to serve the Church; to care for people, to collaborate with the Kingdom of God on earth, to worship and to help people be aware of the presence of God. I encourage you to join with me and help me find a vision for the next chapters of our church's lives, and to do so in a way that does not fulfil the old joke "If I were you I would not start from here!"

REDEEM. A word most often understood as a churchy jargon word for what God in Christ has done for us. If you look in a dictionary it may take you into the world of pawn brokers, but again I want to move from re- to "deem". To deem something is to assign it a value, to assess it, or to give it worth. God chooses not only to see our maximum value, the best in us, our potential, but to enable it to be a reality. We are adopted as God's children, we are deemed to be heirs. We are given the same status as his Son Jesus, we are deemed his children, his heirs, through God's free gift; we do not earn it, but do get it. I encourage you to know that God again and again welcomes you as his children just as he does his only Son, and to recognise all people, therefore, as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

REMEMBER. A very common word, and as we wade through John 6 with its imagery of the "bread of life" and the words we use to share the bread to remember, let's again focus, not on the repeating but on the "member". We are the body of Christ; his eyes, ears, hands, feet, heart and mind. We take communion for many reasons. I encourage you to see it not just as an expression of belonging, but to put into concrete action God's intentions, to remember!

There is one last re- word, **RESURRECTION**, but this cannot be divided into re- and the rest of the word. For the resurrection of Christ by God from the dead is vindication of the once offered, full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, so that now we can know that we live in His light and love.

God bless, Andrew

Prayers

Almighty God, whose kingdom is everlasting and power infinite: have mercy upon the whole Church; and so rule the heart of your servant *Elizabeth, our Queen*, and Governor, that she (knowing whose minister she is) may above all things seek thy honour and glory: and that we and all her subjects (duly considering whose authority she has) may faithfully serve, honour and humbly obey her, in You, and for You, according Your blessed word and ordinance, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with You and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, ever one God, world without end.

Amen

The GENERAL THANKSGIVING

All: Almighty God, Father of all mercies,
we your unworthy servants
give you most humble and hearty thanks
for all your goodness and loving kindness
to us and to all people.

We bless you for our creation, preservation,
and all the blessings of this life;
but above all for your immeasurable love
in the redemption of the world
by our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the means of grace,
and for the hope of glory.

And give us, we pray,
such a sense of all your mercies
that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful,
and that we show forth our praise,
not only with our lips but in our lives,
by giving up ourselves to your service,
and by walking before you in holiness
and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit,
be all honour and glory, for ever and ever.

Amen