

ST ANDREW'S STEWTON CHURCH COMMUNITY

SUNDAY 22ND AUGUST 2021

12TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Welcome to St Andrew's Stewton Church Community - Post 79

In our times of worship, alone or with others, we practice the awareness of the presence of God. God is everywhere and in all things. We **cannot not** be in the presence of God! Where else would we go? 'To whom shall we go. You have (the words of) eternal life.' (John 6:68) Also the psalmist says, 'if we go up to the heavens above or deep beneath the earth, we still can't get away from God.' (Psalm 139:7-10).

Lord, open our eyes to see. Clear the mist of our self-centred humanity to behold your glory in the here and now, in the ordinary and the everyday.

Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice for us to open up a clear and living way into the glorious presence of God. Let us respond by confessing our failings and receive his loving forgiveness.

You faithfully provide for us day by day. We can neglect to be thankful for your bounty.

Lord, have mercy.

You call us and equip us to serve. We spend our days careless in our commitment to you.

Christ, have mercy.

You lead us into fullness of life. We hang back from following beyond our comfort zone.

Lord, have mercy.

The Scripture readings set for today:

Joshua 24:1-2a. 14-18

Joshua's last speech to the Israelites recalls how God delivered them from slavery and brought them to the Promised Land. Joshua urges them to reject idols and serve God alone. The people declare their commitment to the Lord their God.

Ephesians 6:10-20

Paul reminds the Ephesians that the Christian struggle is against opposing spiritual powers rather than human beings. He urges them to arm themselves with God's full spiritual resources in Christ and remain constant in prayer.

John 6:56-69

Jesus' offer of life to those who eat his flesh and drink his blood, troubles his disciples. Many desert him, but Peter speaks for the Twelve, affirming his trust in Jesus as the Holy One of God.

The Reflection for today:

The world appears to be full of rules, doesn't it? Some of these can appear pretty pointless. Now I accept we do need some rules. For example, we all must drive on the same side of the road to avoid chaos and I'm sure you can think of others too. But then there are other 'rules' which would appear to have little purpose other than to give someone the opportunity to think them up, just because they are in a position where they can, and then inflict them on the rest of us.

Jesus was clearly not good at following this type of rule when he discovered an un-named woman with a spinal curvature in the synagogue. Jesus was there teaching, so you might have thought that would be his priority. After all, the woman herself hadn't asked for healing, even though because of her disability, she is unable to stand up straight and is condemned to look at the ground as she journeys through life. Jesus notices her and calls her to him, telling her that she is delivered from her infirmity. And as he lays his hands on her, she can straighten up for the first time in her life. It's almost impossible to imagine her joy.

But and it is a big but because this healing happened on a Sabbath! And even worse Jesus's act of healing had been spotted by the leader of the synagogue. And it was his job to enforce the rules. And of course, rules are rules and are there to be enforced!

So, wait a minute he says to Jesus, what's the big hurry. You can't just come in here healing people just because you feel like it. There are rules about that sort of thing. The difficulty here is while the leader of the synagogue was the law enforcer, those whose task it is to enforce rules can easily slip into the mindset of law-keepers set against lawbreakers. Exceptions, they feel, have to be kept to the minimum so that the system itself is not undermined.

We've seen recently how the Home Office has been so rule bound that large numbers of people of the 'Windrush' generation have been treated unjustly and the Government has had to beat a hasty retreat. But the issue here with this synagogue official would appear to be more straightforward. So, he asks Jesus why this woman couldn't just wait another day, after all she'd had this condition all her life and then Jesus could heal her the next day and then everything would be all right. This woman was actually in no mortal danger. So, if the Sabbath is part of the rhythm of life - work and rest, are to be a source of spiritual renewal. Isn't Jesus flouting the law?

It's an interesting question, but no, Jesus infringes the man-made Sabbath observance for the most pressing reason. This woman's condition is a symptom of a deeper disorder. So, for Jesus, there was no time to be wasted. When rules, instructions and commandments designed to make us walk tall, only serve to weigh us down, they thwart the purpose they were meant to serve. For me, I have always believed that a rule which does not actually help, only serves to hinder.

So, by way of explanation, Jesus quotes one of the forty odd rules which governed the Sabbath. This was the one that permits someone to untie their ox or ass and take it out to give it water. Now it's fairly certain that many in the synagogue that day would have done just that before they came. But then Jesus points out, you untied an animal, I untied a woman. So how can you condemn me? Then Jesus goes on to explain that where He is, the kingdom is present bringing healing and wholeness.

Actually, keeping the Sabbath was supposed to represent the liberation of God's people from captivity in Egypt. But man-made rules and commands can so easily become the very means to enslave people. Jesus was clear that he had come so that people could have life in all its abundance not a whole raft of rules which made little sense for everyone to follow.

Clearly, we can't just abandon all rules and regulations, that way only leads to chaos. After all, which side of the road would you drive on? But nor will God's kingdom come if we resist celebrating God's creation and working with Him to renew His image in his human family.

And in a sense, that brings us to where we are as St. Andrew's community at the present time. We have started to unlock our church gently, gradually. The first weekend in September will give us an opportunity to start coming together again. In all honesty, I don't really know what that weekend will be like even apart from the weather. And even more importantly I don't know what we do next. But we have an opportunity to come together and Alan and I will be exploring with everyone what our realistic options are and how we are to achieve them. So don't just turn up expecting to hear what next. Think about it, talk about it, pray about it, but then come with thoughts and ideas. It may well be that we are unable to return to St. Andrews 'just as it was.' But is that such a bad thing. Many of the communities around here may not be returning at all.

And there is to be a Deanery Synod on September 11th at St. James 10am until 2pm to which, this time, you are all invited. I was so impressed by the number of you that turned up to St. Andrew's AGM at St. James and the more of us who attend this Deanery Synod where hard decisions will be made, the stronger our position will be as we consider our future within the Deanery.

So, until we next meet.

God bless you all.

Robert



We are called to pray continually, bringing all our prayers and requests to the Lord our God. We respond by setting time aside to pray and to inform our prayers...

...we bring before the Lord the leaders in our world – leaders of nations, organisations, communities and families. We ask that they may receive wisdom to make godly, just, compassionate decisions in the complex choices they face, and that they may act in love for those under their care.

...we bring before the Lord Christians across the world – believers in countries sympathetic, indifferent or hostile to their faith. We ask that they may receive courage to stand firm during difficult times, and that they may remain single-minded in their service when times are easier. In the Anglican cycle of prayer today we remember the *Anglican Church of South America*.

...we bring before the Lord the needy in our world – those caught up in war, poverty or loss of any kind. We ask that the love and freedom of Christ may break into situations where they feel they have no choice, and that they may receive hope and comfort where they least expect it.

This week we remember those caught up in the situations and their aftermath in

Afghanistan

Haiti

Those battling wild fires

Those coping with Covid 19 and the vaccine roll-out

...we pray for those in our own community of faith who have asked our prayers:
*Marguerite Baillie, Peggy Baillie, Anne-Marie Bidwell, Ed Cox, Revd Moira Davies,
Hildegard Dettmer-Becroft, Rosemary Huke, Fr James Drayton, Oscar Gabryel, Mal Locking,
Sue Locking, Bob Lewis, Anna Mamwell, Mary Oxley, Gerry Purcell, Alan Pounds, Sylvia Pounds,
Andrea Prior, Betty Robinson, Eileen Robinson, Enid Spicer, Joyce Terrett, John Troughton,
Pauline Watson, Stuart Watson.*

...we bring before the Lord our own situations, our dilemmas, ourselves. We ask that we may always be open to the Spirit telling us what we need, even if we do not want to hear, and that as we trust his leading, we may find ourselves on a path that brings blessings to both ourselves and others.

...and so we commit all these concerns to the Lord who is ever faithful and all-powerful as he hears his people's prayers. Amen.

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.

God of constant mercy,
who sent your Son to save us:
remind us of your goodness,
increase your grace within us,
that our thankfulness may grow,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



And now may the Father who has formed you in his image, bless you;
the Son who welcomes you into his kingdom, bless you;
and the Spirit who sends you out in his name, bless you;
today and every day. Amen.



**Act of Spiritual
Communion**

Lord Jesus, you are the Bread of Life,
may we always hunger for your word,
for your presence in our lives,
for the peace you alone can give,
and for the courage and confidence you inspire
without which in these times
we cannot live as your disciples in the world.
May we never forget you,
never walk away from you,
but always trust in you and remain close by you,
and may we be united with you for ever. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy
Spirit as it was in the beginning, is now and shall be for
ever. Amen.

I just leave this image with you to inform your prayers in the coming days...



Readings for next Sunday

August 29th 2021

13th Sunday after TRINITY

Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-9

James 1:17-end

Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23



ubuntu

In certain regions of South Africa, when someone does something wrong, he is taken to the center of the village and surrounded by his tribe for two days while they speak of all the good he has done. They believe each person is good, yet sometimes we make mistakes, which is really a cry for help. They unite in this ritual to encourage the person to reconnect with his true nature. The belief is that unity and affirmation have more power to change behavior than shame and punishment. This is known as Ubuntu - humanity towards others.



Good Morning,

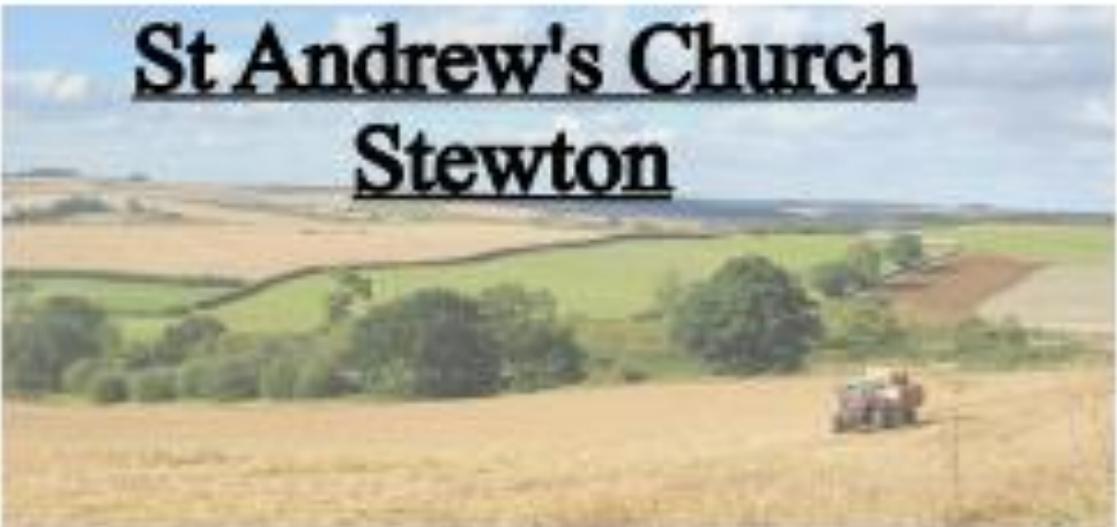
A busy week, with long days and late nights, but the sheds are filling with wheat. We are anxiously watching the cloudy skies this morning hoping that they will clear, so we can finish a 68 acre field we had to pull out of last night at 10.00pm. Once the damp comes down the straw becomes too wet to combine. The linseed is beginning to change now, and by the time we get out of the wheat, it will be ready to cut in about 10 days.



We had a racing pigeon in one of our sheds for a couple of days. It had been attacked by another bird, and was too afraid to come out I managed to catch him yesterday, and get him back to his owner, so another feel good moment! Off to empty last night's trailers now so, hope you all have a lovely day.

Jane x





St Andrew's Church Stewton

Lincolnshire Wolds & Coast Churches Festival

4-5th September 10am-4pm
Saturday & Sunday

Church will be open for viewing

Sunday at 3-00pm - A short outdoor Service

Outdoor plant & book stall

Gazebos & tables

Bring your own picnic or a flask

Biscuits & Cold drinks available

A warm welcome awaits!





Today's contribution is from Mark Watkins...

Over the last few years many examples of the peoples of our counties becoming polarised have been given; Scottish Independence, Brexit, various factions of political parties, the climate change debate, and not least within the Church of England. The reasons for this are many, but when I came across the inestimable book "Lean Logic – A Dictionary for the Future and how to Survive It" by David Fleming, the following entry on Narcissism struck a chord.....

Love of the self. The person is entranced by his own mental ability and moral standing, to the point of being unable to hear any contrary view. Self-love is noted for its fidelity:

*The sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
And all my soul and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my Heart.*

William Shakespeare, Sonnets, 1609.

Narcissism is the inevitable product of a society which has become so banal that there is all too little, apart from the self, left to love. This is fatal to argument because the person who loves himself has to love his own opinion, and is even defined by it; a change of opinion would suggest that there had been a change in the person himself, so that the person the narcissist formerly loved no longer exists, leaving him or her with nothing to love at all. In these circumstances, the argument that the opinion is wrong, and that the matter is more complex than it seems, has no chance of being heard or of getting anywhere. In a banal society, thought is dead.

When discussing the lamentable state of the rural church with a friend, she mentioned "post Christian Britain" as a cause; "Oh no" I replied, "anti-Christian Britain", for Narcissism has replaced the two Great Commandments of our faith...

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

Any Christian Church of the future must put them back as the priority because an anti-Christian Britain is a terrifying thought indeed.

Mark

Spoiler alert

