



March Team Ministry

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

Welcome

20th Sunday after Trinity ~ 17th October 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

St Wendreda's Sundays 11am

Prayers for this week

Most glorious God, in Jesus you show us that your will is to save. Grant to us your people the boldness to desire a place in your kingdom, and courage to drink the cup of suffering, and the grace to find in service the glory you promise. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever. Amen.

Suffering God, in whose name we seek glory for ourselves: cast down the idols that serve our fear and guilt, our need for blame, for punishment; direct our angry hearts to him who bears our wounds where there is no more need to fight; through Jesus Christ, the true God and servant of all. Amen.

Mark 10 v35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to Jesus and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.' When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

Job 38 v1-7 & 34-41

The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

'Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, "Here we are"? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? 'Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

Meditation

In the story of Job, he is portrayed as the model of a good and pious man with many children and possessions and who serves God in an unselfish way. The tempter proposes an experiment to God; if Job would lose his good fortune, then he would lose his trust in God. 'Ok' says God and it happens, but Job does not give up God. The tempter then proposes to afflict Job with ulcers, sickness and misery. Yet as the sick Job sits on the rubbish dump, no curse comes on his lips.

In the long middle part of the book, Job is described as the prototype of a rebel. Job says, 'Why does all this have to happen to me? Why to me and not to others?' Friends visit Job to comfort and grieve with him. But when Job goes on and on, they've had enough and start contending with him. To begin with the friends still sympathise with Job, and also take on Job's suffering on their own shoulders. Gradually they speak more fiercely; instead of being supportive friends they become his accusers. They want to tell Job that he only has himself to blame as he is the cause of his own suffering. It's so obvious; if you're rich and everything is going well with you, everyone wants to be your friend and no one feels a need to comment on your behaviour, but when things aren't going well, your friends turn into moralists.

Job reacts angrily to the rebukes of his friends; 'I haven't committed any sins in the past which mean I deserve to suffer now. Of course, I have my faults, but not so many to warrant suffering like this! God has done it to me, or else he is looking on with indifference. Why do I have to suffer like this? I don't believe your explanation, that someone for whom things go badly has caused this by his sins. Just look around you – don't good people fare badly, and bad people fare well? Is that justice? You don't answer my objections. I want to hear from God himself; let him make it clear to me!'

Many people ask things from God. So does Job. But he gets an answer, and that doesn't happen to everyone. God replies to Job, 'Where were you when I established the earth? Do you know the plan of creation? Can you understand the patterns of the stars? Does rain have a father, and do you know him? Do you have power over wild animals? Can you put a bit through the nose of a crocodile, and train him to follow you or give you a ride? Can you make a hippopotamus perform party tricks? Tell me,' says God, 'do you know all this so well!'

God celebrates the greatness of creation, a creation that is so massive in scale, rich in diversity, and intricate in detail that humans belong only on the periphery of it. And does such a miniscule part of creation want to criticise God, or take responsibility?

God shows that the human categories of justice are inappropriate for judging him and the whole of creation. The friends have tried to reduce God to a moral bookkeeper: add up the good and subtract the bad, to give a total. God is reduced to being a pedantic moralist, a guardian of the principle 'one good turn deserves another'. God shows that he does not fit into human categories. God rejects the idea of reward or punishment, of providence and predestination, because these reduce his plan to something measurable by human standards. In answer to Job's complaint, God offers a view of the cosmos from a divine perspective and shows that human categories fall short of his plan for the cosmos.

God's answer makes Job open his eyes to a view of the cosmos 'from above', and so he also sees himself from this divine perspective. He recognises his previous ignorance and resigns himself to the fact that he is simply dust and ashes. He no longer needs to know God's unfathomable nature. He is freed from the false expectations which are aroused by the old idea of retribution and reward which have misled his friends.

God then reacts again and says that Job has done well to ask questions, not to keep to the old idea of retribution and not to succumb to the trite language of faith. For the questions that Job asked were real questions about himself and his relationship with God, put from the perspective of real suffering. The friends, says God, were wrong in what they said. When they visited Job they did not begin to think from Job's perspective, but argued instead from general theology, a theology of retribution. Job begins with reality of life, his life. The friends argue in general terms, not from a particular perspective. Therefore the friends are wrong about God, because they have pinned God to a scheme of reward and punishment.

After all this profundity, the book concludes with a happy ending – but wait for next week for that !!!

Ellen van Wolde wrote in her book “Mr & Mrs Job”, (and she can take the credit for this meditation) “Ask a Catholic whether he or she has ever heard of Job, and may well be told, ‘Oh yes, Job is that pious man who loses everything.’ Ask a Protestant what they know about Job, and you may well be told, ‘Job, he’s that rebellious man who clashes with God because he thinks his suffering is unjust.’ This may indicate that to rebel against God is one of the worst things you can do. How is it that people have such different views about Job? The book of Job seems to encourage them.”

God bless, Andrew

Prayers ~ in the Week of Prayer for World Peace

Give us, Lord God, a vision of our world as your love would make it, a world where the weak are protected and none go hungry or poor; a world where the benefits of civilised life are shared and everyone can enjoy them; a world where different races, nations and cultures live in mutual respect; a world where peace is built with justice and justice is guided by love; and give us the inspiration and courage to build it,

We pray for children whose childhood has been interrupted; For young eyes which have seen far too much; Young hands trained to hold weapons; Young feet forced to march; Young minds seared by commands no child should encounter. We pray for children used in conflicts to be set free, for your healing to restore bodies and minds and the bodies and minds of those they have harmed, for their reconciliation within families and communities and an end to cycles of grief and trauma. And we pray, O Lord, for a just and peaceful resolution of conflicts that rend our world and that put children in harm's way.

We grieve for those who have lost loved ones during the pandemic; for those separated from family and friends for months at a time, for livelihoods adversely affected, and for those whose mental and physical health has suffered. Be alongside them in their sorrow, and as the world returns to some sort of normality may they not be forgotten. We give thanks for the heroic efforts of those who have worked tirelessly in research and in the medical professions to bring healing and comfort to those affected by the virus, and for those who have supported the vulnerable and lonely.

All-loving, ever present God, we pray for our neighbours – for the people we know and love, and for the people we have never met. We pray for our neighbours – for the people across our street, and for people on the other side of the world. We pray for our neighbours – for the people who look and sound like us and for the people who couldn't be more different. We pray for our neighbours – for everyone who is struggling, for everyone who is being marginalised and oppressed.

Make us more compassionate and loving people to care for each other as you would have us do; this we ask through the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen