



# **March Team Ministry**

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

*Welcome*

## **4th Sunday of the Kingdom Season - 20th November 2022**

Please keep in touch with one another, and I am always glad to hear from you on 01354 572117 or at [andrew.marchurch@gmail.com](mailto:andrew.marchurch@gmail.com)

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*We are still asking people to be sensible and sensitive . Mask wearing is optional. Respect people's space. Washing hands is a good idea. Wine offered (for those wishing it). Dipping is not recommended.*

**~ 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**

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### **Prayer, Collect, for this week**

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you gave us your Son, the beloved one who of all the ages, the One who is, who was rejected, the Saviour who appeared defeated. Yet the mystery of his kingship illumines our lives.

Show us in his death the victory that crowns the ages, and in his broken body the love that unites heaven and earth. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

God of unbroken weakness, you laugh at our love of power: may we find kingship in the love that is killed for speaking its name without even the shadow of force. Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### **Jeremiah 23 v1-6**

*Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. Therefore, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord.*

*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'*

## **Gospel of Luke 23 v33-43**

*When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'*

*One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'*

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### **Meditation**

*Much as I want to meditate with you on the conversations that Luke gives us Jesus speaking from the cross, I feel compelled to give way to the words of the Bishop of Durham (from the Church Times) who has something more important to say that we need to hear and reflect on. Andrew*

Often, when reading the passage of the Good Samaritan, we take away thoughts about how to be a good neighbour to those in need. This is good and true, but could we be missing a greater meaning? Jesus told the parable in answer to a question from a lawyer; "Who is my neighbour?" Jesus answers the question through a story, helping the man to imagine, who might he need his neighbour to be. And the difference in the nationality, between the injured Jew left on the side of the road and the Samaritan who assisted, simply was not relevant.

Just last week, a national newspaper ran the headline "Migrants side by side in hotels with public", and the Home Secretary referred to the high numbers of individuals seeking to cross the Channel to claim asylum as an 'invasion' of the south coast. This language, the politics of othering, is dehumanising, and serves only to inflame damaging rhetoric surrounding the plight of refugees. Instead of seeing these families in neighbouring hotel rooms as neighbours in need of sanctuary, it peddles the untruth that they are too different and less worthy of dignity, compassion, and respect. This language may lead not only to an apathetic response to serious humanitarian issues at our borders, but also encourage disdain towards rather than empathy with and understanding of, those in need.

The numbers of people crossing the Channel increase yearly, and it is right that the Government should seek, through a range of appropriate measures, to deter crossings that endanger the lives of those who undertake them. But what would a policy led by compassion, and a rejection of us-and-them thinking, look like?

FIRST, it would acknowledge that those who are crossing the Channel have a right to claim asylum on arrival, and that a majority have a credible claim, but that the system is currently not processing their applications efficiently. Last year, 98% of those crossing the Channel claimed asylum, but only 4% of those have been processed so far. Those who have been considered have an 85% grant rate.

By way of comparison, between July and September, France made more than 31,000 initial decisions on asylum applications – that is the same as the UK in 21 months. (18 other European countries accept more migrants per head than the UK does). Politicians and the media alike often refer to those crossing the Channel as 'illegal migrants', but the top nationalities making dangerous crossings include Eritrea, Syria, and Afghanistan, and for these people 97% of these people asylum claims are granted.

SECOND, a policy response led by compassion would acknowledge that there are very limited legal, safe, and accessible routes for families to claim asylum in the UK. Families are, therefore, left with an impossible choice, and are at the mercy of smugglers taking criminal advantage. To claim asylum in the UK, a person has to be physically present here, but, for those most likely to be in need of protection, there is no visa available for this, and there are no UK consulates on European soil where asylum can be claimed before beginning a journey. Further co-operation is needed with France and the wider European Union to explore ways in which people can apply for safe travel to claim asylum. The UK also still has not replaced elements of the Dublin system which were in place when we were a member of the EU. These allowed people to be reunited safely with family members in the UK. Safe and legal routes would severely disrupt smuggling operations.

FINALLY, and of the utmost importance, a compassionate policy response would acknowledge that words matter, and that they influence how vulnerable groups are perceived and treated. As a country with a rich history of providing sanctuary to refugees, the UK and its citizens should ensure that they never risk maligning groups, or believe that they are justified in persecuting – or even perpetrating acts of violence against – asylum-seekers and migrants. As I type these words, ‘ILLEGAL immigrants’ is trending as a hashtag on Twitter. This is simply intolerable.

Grown-up policy discussions are needed urgently to help solve issues surrounding dangerous crossings and prevent humanitarian crises at processing centres. The way to reduce the number of people travelling dangerously to the UK is to create more safe ways for people to do this. The Government should be looking at expanding resettlement routes and instigating humanitarian visas that people could apply for in embassies. Alongside this, action needs to be taken to tackle the backlog of asylum applications at home.

Just before Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, the lawyer said that he knew the way to inherit eternal life was to love your neighbour as yourself. And that is the key: to view ourselves as equal to our neighbour, and as deserving of empathy and compassion; to see ourselves in need of sanctuary; and to act as we would want to be welcomed. Jesus’ view of neighbour is not limited – neither should ours be.

## God bless, Andrew

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### Prayers

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. For with the oil of gladness you anointed Christ the Lord, your only Son, to be our great high priest and king of all creation. As priest, he offered himself once for all upon the altar of the cross and redeemed the human race by this perfect sacrifice of peace. As king he claims dominion over all your creatures, that he may bring before your infinite majesty a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.

So, let us with confidence present our prayers and supplications to the throne of grace. Loving God, you have taught us that the power of the heart is greater than the power of wealth and might. Hear us as we pray for the fulfilment of your reign.

We pray for all those in positions of power, that they may govern with wisdom and integrity, serving the needs of their people.

May your reign come.

We pray for your Church, the sign of your reign, that it may extend your welcome to people of every race and background.

May your kingdom come.

We pray for Christians of every denomination, that together we may come to understand the royal priesthood you bestowed on us in baptism.

May your dominion come.

We pray for those whose commitment to truth brings them into conflict with earthly powers, that they may have the courage to endure.

May your rule come.

We pray for our communities of faith that attentive to your word we may always worship in spirit and in truth.

May your reign come.

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by you be plenteously rewarded; through Jesus Christ our Lord, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.