

St. David's Church Exeter and S. Michael's and All Angels, Mount Dinham, Exeter.

Newsletter for 23 August 2020

Dear Friends

Welcome to this weekly update for the eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

Sunday Worship

Today our online service is on Youtube at this address:

https://youtu.be/5Z3BABN_kV0

and both our churches will be open for worship.

Next Sunday, 30 August, there will be a Youtube service and Nigel Guthrie will preaching at both churches.

Churches Opening for public worship

This week opening times are:

St Michael and All Angels – Wednesday Morning Prayer at 9.30am followed by Mass at 10am and Sunday Mass at 11am

St David – Thursday 10.30am, Holy Communion, Sunday 9.30am Holy Communion

Covid-19 Safe

These are the special provisions we are making to keep worshippers as safe as possible:

Hand sanitizer must be used on entering and leaving church.

We should now wear face coverings in church. There are important exemptions which can be found at

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/COVID%2019%20advice%20on%20face%20coverings%20v3.0.pdf>

and which include those with a hearing impairment.

Please remove face coverings carefully before receiving Holy Communion and replace them afterwards.

Seating will be distanced to approximately 2 metres. Please sit on the seats where service books are placed. Seating is also marked by white labels at St Michael's. Please observe appropriate distancing from others at all times and the one way systems through the churches.

Services should be 'no longer than necessary'; in practice that means about 45minutes.

Toilet facilities will be available and please follow the instructions for use.

Please do not attend church if you are feeling ill or are shielding or vulnerable.

Although we will do all we can to make the church safe you attend at your own risk.

Live Daily Prayers

Please join us, if you can, for our streamed short prayer services during the week on our Facebook pages:

On 'St David's Church Exeter' page: Tuesday, Friday and Saturday at 9am and Compline on Monday evening at 8pm.

On 'Friends of St Michael's' page: Wednesday Angelus and Mass at 10am.

Alison Whiting

Next Sunday, 30 August, will be Alison's last Sunday with us. Alison joined the parish in 2017 to complete her curacy and it has been a great pleasure to have her as a colleague since my arrival. Alison's curacy has now been 'signed off' by the Bishop of Exeter and she will be moving her church ministry to St Thomas parish where she is now living. Alison will be celebrating at the 9.30am service at St David's Church next week and there will be an opportunity to say goodbye and thank you to her. Please keep Alison in your prayers as she begins her new ministry 'over the river'.

Ash Leighton Plom

After several Covid-related changes Ash will now be ordained Deacon on Sunday 13 September at 3pm in Exeter Cathedral. Unfortunately the service won't be open to the public but I will be attending as training incumbent to represent the parish. Hopefully the service will be live-streamed on the Cathedral's Facebook page. Please keep Ash in your prayers as he prepares for his ordination.

Reopening of Churches for public worship – a continuing process

The PCC agreed to open our churches for one midweek communion and one Sunday communion. This gives the chance for the churches to be 'quarantined' for 72 hours between times to minimize the risk of any infection. We are keeping this under review in accordance with national and diocesan guidelines. We would love to return to a full range of services but that is not yet feasible so please be patient as we need to do this as safely as possible! Thank you for keeping this process in your prayers.

Magazine

Please think about providing an article for the September magazine. Our editorial team would love to hear from you if you have some reflections on the present situation or interesting experiences or views.

Phone Networks

I know that many of you have appreciated phone calls from other members of the church community. If you would like to be phoned by someone and haven't had any contact please let me know at nigel.guthrie1@gmail.com

or by ringing me on 01392 660226 or Ash on 07855305519.

Your Prayers are asked for...

Charles Argall, Janine, Charles Speed-Andrews, Nicky Jarman and her husband Tim and their family, Jacqueline and her family, Joy and her family, Claude and Gillian Harbord, Elizabeth Hewitt, Anne Smith, Grace Tointon, Pam Smith and her family, James and Katy Tyler, Andrew Wakley, Rosemary Willcox and Maurice Wright.

In the Parish Cycle of Prayer we give thanks for those who act as welcomers

and sidespeople and pray for all who are working to make our churches as safe as possible.

We pray for those not yet able to return to church and all who are worshipping with us at home

Please also pray for:

the people of Lebanon and Belarus

those areas and countries suffering greatly from Covid-19, and those who are feeling lonely or isolated;

those who are facing unemployment;

children who are living in vulnerable settings;

Exeter Food Bank and Exeter City Council;

May God keep you in peace and good health, Nigel Guthrie

Order of Service for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity on Youtube

Opening Prayers

We come in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to hear and receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world, and to seek forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Confession and Absolution

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith firmly resolved to keep God's commandments and to live in love and peace with all.

May your loving mercy come to us, O Lord,
and your salvation according to your word:

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Your word is a lantern to my feet and a light to my path:

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

O let your mercy come to me that I may live, for your law is my delight:

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

The priest pronounces the absolution.

Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent,
have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect

O God, you declare your almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity: mercifully grant to us such a measure of your grace, that we, running the way of your commandments, may receive your gracious promises, and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure; through 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.

First Reading Isaiah 51: 1-6

Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the Lord.
Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug.

Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.
For the Lord will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places,
and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.
Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation;
for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples.
I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.
Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment,
and those who live on it will die like gnats;
but my salvation will be for ever, and my deliverance will never be ended.

Gospel Reading Matthew 16: 13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

An Address by David James Trinity 11 Yr A

The story goes that the hunter was out on the side of the mountain when suddenly he noticed steam rising from a cleft in the rock. Intrigued, he approached the edge of a deep crevasse from where emerged the sound of a torrent and clouds of steam. The cleft was eventually explored by some intrepid climber and at the bottom was indeed a torrent of crystal clear mountain water which was hot to touch - 36.5oC to be precise.

This is the Tamina gorge in a Swiss alpine valley, and its water has become the source for what is nowadays a luxury spa. Its healing properties have been used since at least the 13th century when the sick were lowered down to benefit from the waters, but now you can stay in the height of 21st century luxury at Bad Ragaz Hotel, and if you've got a bit of money in the bank you can stay in one of the top suites for a mere £10k a night - yes, per night.

I learnt all these facts from a series called *Amazing Hotels* in which the restaurant critic, Giles Coren, and Michelin-starred chef, Monica Galetti, explore behind the scenes of some of the world's most breathtaking establishments - you may have seen this one.

Well, it came to mind when I read today's passage from Isaiah and the gospel account of Jesus' visit to Caesarea Philippi. The phrase that caught my attention was 'Look to the rock from which you were hewn and the quarry from which you were dug.'

Isaiah here is reminding people of God's amazing grace demonstrated in their history of salvation - starting with Abraham and Sarah, both as good as dead as far as childbearing was concerned, when Sarah conceived their only son, Isaac, the father of Esau and Jacob whom God renamed Israel. Abraham who was only one, was told his descendants would be as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore or the stars in the heavens, and so it proved. Abraham became Israel.

You see, says Isaiah, God can be relied upon to bring life out of barrenness 'he will make her wilderness like Eden'. God is the eternal re-creator, the one who is ready to raise his arm in strength to save - 'the coastlands wait for me,' says the Lord, 'and for my arm they hope.'

Look to the rock. It is a frequent metaphor in the OT for God. Think for a moment of what you naturally associate with the word (but cast out any thoughts of Brighton!). Here are just a few of the images in scripture:

A place to hide in; Isaiah 2.21 - *Enter the caverns of the rocks And the clefts in the crags From the terror of the Lord*

God himself; Deut. 32.4 - *The Rock, his work is perfect And all his ways are just.*

A place of security; Ps 62.2 - *God alone is my rock and my salvation My stronghold so that I shall never be shaken*

Then there is the unexpected but important picture of the rock as source of life-giving water. This, of course, comes from the story of Moses striking the rock in the wilderness to bring out a gushing stream for the parched Israelites to drink from and water their flocks.

That is an image that recurs time and again in the HB but St Paul also picks it up when he refers to the Israelites' time wandering in the wilderness in his first letter to the Corinthians. He sees crossing the Red Sea as a prefiguring of baptism and the sending of manna from heaven and water to drink as a foretaste of the Christian Eucharist -

'All were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ'.

This imagery has permeated Christian spirituality too, particularly its hymnody - think of the words of Cwm Rhondda, the hymn *Guide me O thou great Redeemer*

Open now the crystal fountain whence the healing stream doth flow.

Another well-known hymn also draws on these Biblical stories:

Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

- an image drawn from God hiding Moses in the cleft of the rock as his glory passed by.

The name of the tune for that hymn is Petra - the Greek word for a rock. And that's the key to the pun in the gospel passage today. Jesus has already given Peter the name Cephas - the word for rock in Aramaic and so he builds on it as it were by telling him that on the foundation of this rock he will build his church. It's a play on words in the Greek text - 'You are Petros and on this petra I will build my church.'

If you were to go to Caesarea Philippi today, and I expect some of you have, you will understand why Jesus hits on this particular metaphor. He and his disciples will be very familiar with all those images of rocks and water and their resonances in the Hebrew Bible and there they are now in Caesarea Philippi surrounded by high rocks. The place is up in the hills in the north of Israel and you look up at these massive cliffs which dominate the landscape there.

And out of these rocks comes a rushing torrent of crystal clear water. It is in fact the source of the river Jordan, formed by underground meltwater from Mt

Hermon, which pours out of the mouth of a huge cave at the foot of the cliffs to begin its journey down to the Dead Sea.

The place today is called Banyas, which reveals its classical origins. It is the place where the god Pan was thought to dwell, and the cave was believed to be the place which was the entrance to the underworld that Pan presided over. Once you know that, all of a sudden Jesus' giving the keys of death and hell to Peter takes on a new sense. Something greater than pagan superstition is here. The power that Christ gives his Church is one that brings light out of the darkness of the cave and pours out his healing and life-giving stream.

Then when Jesus is taken down from the cross he is buried in a tomb carved out of the rock and a huge stone is placed at the entrance. This is the place from where new life will flow; Christ, the living water will gush forth from the cave and will fill the whole earth.

So the scriptures today fill us with such thoughts and encourage us to know that no matter what our uncertain life, shadowed by death or disaster or pain or injustice may bring, we still have a rock in Christ to whom we can cling and from this rock new life will emerge. Ultimately God's purpose is sure. As Isaiah says, Look to the rock from which you are hewn. Know that from him healing waters flow and new life abounds, such life as nothing can extinguish, such power of recreation as no power can overcome. These, then, are uplifting scriptures for hard and worried times.

But do they make a difference? Are they any help when it really comes to the crunch or are they just pretty pictures? I believe they do make a real difference because they shape our inner lives more than perhaps we realise. When we are at our limits as human beings these are the images that manage to articulate and frame our innermost feelings.

We visited my son in Bristol recently and as I think I may have mentioned before, when we go we usually manage to watch on Netflix another episode of the series *The Crown*. This time we watched the one which included the terrible disaster of Aberfan in 1966.

Some of you will remember it. After days of torrential rain a huge coal tip, turned to slurry by an underground spring, suddenly began its inexorable slide down the side of the mining valley in S Wales, a few miles from where my family lived.

There was a primary school filled with children in the village which lay in the path of this massive black mudslide. It was engulfed in moments. 116 children were killed and 144 people in total died in the disaster. The most moving scene was at the funeral of the children when the community gathered around the long communal grave. Shaped by the faith and congregational singing of the chapel, they spontaneously burst into song. In the face of a river of death and hades they sang instead of healing streams of life. We can't sing them unfortunately but we

can listen now to words by Charles Wesley matched by the powerful tune Aberystwyth. Let's do that now.

**Jesu, lover of my soul, Let me to thy bosom fly, While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high: hide me, O my Saviour, hide Till the storm of life
is past; Safe into the haven guide, O receive my soul at last.**

**Plenteous grace with thee is found, Grace to cover all my sin; Let the healing
streams abound, Make and keep me pure within. Thou of life the fountain art,**

Freely let me take of thee, Spring thou up within my heart, Rise to all eternity.

Closing Prayers

**God of glory, the end of our searching,
help us to lay aside all that prevents us from seeking your kingdom,
and to give all that we have to gain the pearl beyond all price,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

**The Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you,
The Lord life us the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace,
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.**

Do join us next week for our service in church or on You tube!

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