

Bulletin for Sunday 4th October 2020

Greetings to all of you! As the rain pours down outside, I'm grateful for the light and warmth in my study - and as this strange year continues, I'm grateful for the warmth and humour of our church families, and the fellowship which reaches out in new and imaginative ways to support those in need. Thank you!

Hymn: Praise to the Holiest in the height (R&S 103)

Prayer: Living, loving, healing God of creation,
we give thanks for the wonders of the world around us,
and we give thanks that you have called us, again and again,
to live in your love and be your people in the world;
we give thanks that you sent many prophets, and then Jesus,
to get our attention and to show us your love and your way;
may we, in turn, live visibly as your people,
and act as Christ to those who need to meet you.
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and everything we bring to you or give in your service,
today and every day. In Jesus' name, Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Isaiah chapter 5: verses 1-7 and
 Matthew chapter 21: verses 33-46

Reflection: You can hardly miss the similarities between these two readings - as so often, Jesus (and his audience) had a familiarity with the message of the prophet which allowed him to tell a story with immediately recognisable parallels... and then also with crucial differences. Both stories involve vineyards whose owners lavish care on them and confidently expect a good harvest; and in both cases those hopes are not fulfilled. But where Isaiah prophecies total destruction of the failed vineyard, Jesus suggests that it will be taken over by new tenants. This must have been a shock to those of the religious rulers who were listening to him! They were to be supplanted because their leadership had failed to produce the just and righteous society which God looked for.

God tried numerous times, in different ways, to make clear that justice and mercy are the fruits which are needed and expected of us. Eventually the good news came to us in the form of Jesus - not another idea or story or prophecy, but a person - the good news personified. He was able to teach by example, not just in words. He was able to be with us - a solid cornerstone; and he was and is available for us all to follow. Amen

Hymn: Blessed city, heavenly Salem (R&S 559)

Prayer: Compassionate God, we hold before you the needs of our world:
as we realise the wonder of your creation
we pray for its preservation and healing;
as we hope for dignity and peace for all peoples
we pray for wise and honest government;
as we feel the pain of the sick, the hungry, and the bereaved
we pray for both your healing presence and your strength
for those entrusted with bringing a practical response.
We hold before you all those we love;
those we worry about, or feel responsible for.....
Hear our prayers, in Jesus' name. Amen

Hymn: My song is love unknown (R&S 207)

May we travel through this week with Christ -
looking to him as our teacher and cornerstone,
and may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love
this week and every week. Amen

If I had been choosing hymns for this week without being tied to the hymn book, I would also have chosen 'Beauty for brokenness', which describes God's priorities so well....

With all three congregations now worshipping indoors, and with local infection rates going up, please do all you can to assist the Elders in keeping everyone safe - especially giving everyone as much space as possible, and keeping masks on at all times. The rules are there as a guide, but common sense and caution are also very useful!

There will be an evening service - Sunday at Six - on Zoom on Sunday evening, this week led by Gerald. All very welcome, online or using a landline phone, contact me for details if you want to join for the first time.

Anne Lewitt